

¡ALLGO PASA!

cultura/ arte/ jotería/ información
V17, No1



“OUR LADY,” ALMA LÓPEZ

CONTENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2001

Co-Chairs: Silvia Bettez & Lucio Meza
 Secretary: José Orta
 Treasurer: Diana Gorham
 Members At-Large:
 Carmen Varela
 David Quinto
 Clemencia Zapata
 Stephanie Hebert
 Miguel García
 Jordana Barton

STAFF

Health Educators:
 Omar González, Rosa González,
 Lillie, Almanza, Remi Vallejo
 Coordinator of Support Services:
 Priscilla Hale, LMSW
 Case Managers:
 Liz Lopez & Carole Metellus
 Program & Fiscal Coordinator:
 Joe Jiménez
 En Nuestras Manos Program Coordinator:
 Ana Romes
 Executive Director:
 Martha Duffer, Psy. D.

ALLGO seeks to empower our community through political, educational, cultural, health, and social programming and services. We recognize that our struggle is linked to the struggle of all oppressed peoples and agree to always be in the forefront in the struggle against all forms of discrimination and oppression in order to transform the World.

ALLGO
 1715 E 6th Street, Suite 112
 Austin, Tejas 78702
 512.472.2001
 Fax: 512.472.6301
 allgoinc@aol.com
 www.allgo.org

2 ALLGO PASA provides a space for sharing progressive visions/ ideas/ knowledge & arte. Sexist, racist, homophobic, violent, or oppressive pieces are not considered for publication. Inquiries, submissions, comments can be directed to ALLGO at the above address.

Spring 01

¡allgo pasa!

free HIV testing at ALLGO
 confidential or anonymous
 mondays 4—8 pm
 call 469.2119 to make an appt

COVER

"Our Lady" by Alma López

Models: Raquel Gutierrez & Raquel Salinas

COVER/

"Our Lady"

Arte by Alma López

3

Making La Trensa: A Vision for ALLGO's Future

Joe Jiménez Explains How ALLGO Se Esta Transformando

PALABRAS/

4

Have You Seen My Brother?

Marlon I. Morales

maya/olmec/xicano/salvadoreño/indigeno love

Omar González

5

Mi Lenguaje, Mi Orgullo

Carmen Varela Affirms Su Acento

6

a wo'mn called sir

sharon bridgforth

11

los dos juanes

MIG~PAB

14

Respuesta

Amid Patriarchal Attacks on Her Work, Threats & Censorship Attempts, Alma López Speaks Back

16

we are taught not to question and these are still the war years:

images of the virgin mary

jackie cuevas

LO QUE 'STA PASANDO/

11 CON GANAS

Call for Submissions for allgo's literary/arte revista

12 Omar's Corner

Omar González Speaks Out on the Census, the Church y Su Amor

13 !snap!

ALLGO Sponsors Weekly Writing Workshop for Queer People of Color, led by sharon bridgforth

Remi Vallejo On Building Community at Brazo a Brazo, ALLGO's Gay & Bisexual Latino Men's Retreat

Making La Trensa: A Vision for ALLGO's Future

¡allgo pasa!

Spring 01

3

In thinking of how to represent in text the movement ALLGO is engaged in, I begin to think about what it is exactly that ALLGO provides gente. When I think of what ALLGO provides gente, I stop for a moment & recognize the immensity of what we endeavor—to provide health, social, educational, political programs & servicios to lesbianas, gays, bisexuals & transgenders, to Raza, to people of color, to artists, to people living with HIV/AIDS, to working

class gente and those of us living in poverty, to many diverse members of Austin's comunidad. People come to ALLGO for many reasons—for case management, the Brazo a Brazo men's programs, the Con la Boca Abierta pláticas, artist development workshops, our spoken word events, and Baile de Amor, por ejemplo. I don't believe it's oversimplifying the case to say that ALLGO provides for nosotras/os.

Nosotras/os. I think of this piece of our work, the oftentimes overlooked or understated realness of what we do—working against the monsters of structured inequality & oppression in order to make *our* lives better, a collective effort to transform the World within our everyday realities. Cuidando/ apoyando/ ayudando/ abrazando/ nosotras/os—these feelings/actions are the impetus for so much change. I believe with all my heart that our work must be by, for and about Us, in the same way that we must support, share, connect with and learn from the by, for, about work being done by other comunidades.

One of the earliest memories I have of queer Latina/o organizing is a voz, a beautifully profound Tejana voice. I was 19, I was at a LLEGÓ work group, and I got to hear María Limón speak about the need for our lgbt Latina/o work. This was 1996 and the group was responding to many white people's claims that queer people of color doing work focused on our communities was divisive, "reverse racism," discriminatory—we are not separating to divide, María said, we are separating to be specific. Truth: we are here to affirm ourselves.

Like a spiritual tattoo, a birthmark/ mantra or the heart of my heart, María Limón's words have always been with me. For me, it is about affirmation—about living and not having our bodies/ideas/desires/histories contested, dismissed or devalued. It is about poder y lo nuestro. It is about shared history, common language, collective vision and responsabilidad. And I believe that what I bring to ALLGO is precisely what María Limón spoke about that day. I believe my work collectively works with the immeasurable contributions of our many volunteers, our staff, board members, and the people who have

given so much of themselves throughout the years. I believe my/our work mixes with 500+ years of resistance—that creating programs at ALLGO is as critical to the liberation of our gente, of all gente as the work of Cesar Chavez, the arte of Alma López, the drag queens and transies who threw rocks at abusive police forces at stonewall, as important to liberation movement as the gente of Vieques who stand up against the assaults of the U.S. military.

For me, poder is about accumulation is about organizing comunidades is about justicia and resistencia. It is about looking to our past to reconstruct our future hoy. With these notions of comunidad & cambio in mind, I share this cuento—that in its sum, ALLGO will be many things to many people, but it can never be all things to all people. ALLGO is but one molecule in a big bang of revolución. And as part of this big bang, ALLGO will always commit itself to rethinking the work we do as a way to keep ourselves in check.

Are we really working towards our mission?? Is ALLGO the best place to give people HIV/AIDS services?? Who should our programs serve?? And what are the stakes of these decisions??

In fall 1999, ALLGO Board and Staff considered these questions, and out of our discussions came a vision for our future. We call it *la trensa*. Three projects: **Informe-VIDA**, prevention and early detection health education for our comunidades as well as treatment advocacy and resource linkages for those of us living with life-threatening and/or chronic health conditions, such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, breast cancer,

instance, integrate goals of Informe-VIDA—men living healthier vidas, making informed decisions about our health and well-being—with goals of ALMA—bringing our comunidad together, connecting, sharing history, knowledge, nurturing consciousness. Our Con la Boca Abierta programs—the pláticas, cenas, cafecitos exploring history and memoria, Chicana lesbian literature, technology and arte, etc.—fulfill multiple goals of our three projects. The image of a trensa reflects the interconnectedness of our efforts/ like our lives/ their inseparability/ the corazón/liver/ lung/ piel that is our comprehensive approach to improving our vidas, improving our comunidad.

Our efforts over the coming years reflect the work of the past 16 years and before. Using as a foundation the work of Informe-SIDA, the tradiciones of Día de los Muertos and Baile de Amor, Día de la Raza, the

¡VIVA ARTE, VIVA CULTURA!

role of ¡ALLGO Pasa!, Pláticas Lesbianas and Entre Amigos in the survival of our comunidad, we recreate a future where we were not meant to survive, much less thrive; care for ourselves, desire and connect. Our efforts reflect these commitments—in 2001 ALLGO responds to the need for breast cancer awareness among lesbianas of color by creating **en nuestras manos...in our hands**; we begin an Artist in Residence program creating opportunities for our comunidades to work with sharon bridgforth, Alma López, Marlon I.

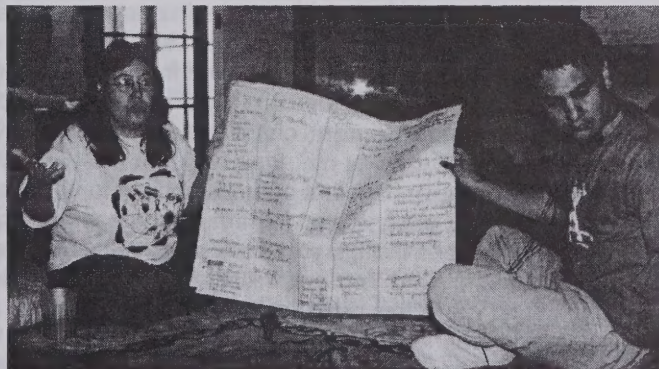
Morales. We hope that in fifteen years the work we are doing today will provide a foundation for new growth, for regeneration. These are the artifacts/ imprints/ echoes we leave behind.

ALMA

AMOR LATINIDAD MOVIMIENTO Y ACCIÓN

and heart disease; **ALMA**, acts of **Amor Latinidad Movimiento y Acción**, a home for community-building and political action, a home for lo nuestro/ the soul of allgo's programs; and finally, **¡Viva Arte, Viva Cultural!**, our efforts to preserve queer Latina/o cultura and arte. Each project weaving into the work of the others, working collectively to create/ resist/ document/ survive/ enjoy.

It would be impossible to say one program belongs solely to one project. The Brazo a Brazo programs for queer hombres, for



Martha Duffer & David Quinto discuss ALLGO's future during Board/Staff retreat.

el arte
del
corazón
es arte
del
pueblo/
el arte del
pueblo
es el
corazón
del arte

Have you seen my brother?

(San Salvador, 2000)

Have you seen my brother? (with urgency)
No, he did not ask me like that.

He was more subtle but still
There are things eyes cannot hide.

He looked deep into me
Hoping LA is small enough.

There is a name buried into my memory
Burned into me by a desperate look into me.

Have you seen my brother?
I've lost touch.

Images of forgotten graves along the border—haunting me
Images of unmarked shallow graves—haunting me
Images of brown bodies covered up
by INS officials and border ranchers—haunting me
Images of tortured, raped, enslaved, beaten down bodies—haunting me
No one is looking for them, will ever remember them
Along the border—haunting me.

Have you seen my brother?
I've lost touch.

He looked deep into me
Hoping LA is small enough.

San Salvador is miles away but I'm
now looking.

And I hope LA is small enough
And I hope I find his brother.

Marlon I. Morales

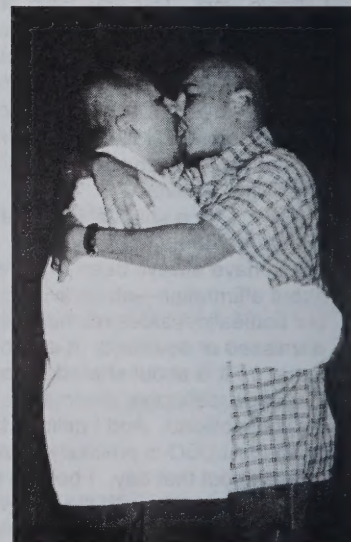
maya/olmec/xicano/salvadoreño/indigeno love

Omar González

pa mi papito,

Marlon I. Morales

I remember you from 500 or so years ago...
I have the memory of your eyes looking straight into my soul and our past life...
You recognized me from some ancient rain forest long since paved over...
maya/olmec/xicano/salvadoreño/indigeno timeless....destino....next time there will be no
smallpox, no hiv to distract us, to get in our way...me entregaré en ti...skin on skin...no
barriers, latex, lenguaje, or any other...we will nourish each other...you used your
indigenous medicinal magic extracted from yerbas long since extinct to sustain me...for
awhile...but not even all the corn, pyramid, & sea goddesses could save me from the
scourge brought here from christianeurocivilization....when i passed into the next cycle of
life...you vowed to meet me again...is that what we saw in each other's eyes...memories of
ancient civilizations ancient peoples ancient tongues ancient rituals ancient existences....
and a longing...a longing and yearning so deep and profound that palabras no puedan
describirlo....and though you won't be able to save me from the current scourge...i will
succumb to hiv and Yemayá will stroke my body with her waves...will bathe me in her cariño
and will rid me of this pestilence...she will comfort me and reassure me that we WILL meet
again and that next time our love will be fully realized...and I will wait for you...impatiently...
but in a split second I will recognize a millenium's worth of memories in your burnt cienna
colored eyes



omar & marlon mackin'

Mi Lenguaje, Mi Orgullo

This next piece I wrote is about language. It came about after having a conversation with a friend of mine where we began to discuss the colonization of our mother tongue. We talked about our lenguaje and the validity of it or lack thereof. As some time passed, I mentioned this topic to my lover, who then pointed out my accento and its fluctuation from Chicana to almost white depending on the situation and environment. This caused me to think and reflect about my language, my history, about myself. I thought about my lineage, how my parents taught each and every one of us to speak Spanish, and how in my own family I have seen one of my own siblings volrear la cara to her cultura, her language. She now seems content to have conformed to the ways of that which we fight so hard to not be.

Nunca has pensado que fueron las primeras palabras que escuchastes cuando llegastes a este mundo? Yo se que las que yo oye vinieron de la lengua Mexicana de me madre y eran "que bonita muchachita." They couldn't have been more right. Mi madresita no hablaba ni una palabra de Ingles. Su piel blanca, sus ojos verdes, sus cabello claro pero su lenguaje puro Mexicano.

My mestizaje is an interesting one, uno mezclado and one I am very proud of. My mother was born in Durango México and lived there until the ripe age of 17 when she then joined her brothers and sisters whom she had never met in El Paso, Tejas. My mother's mother was an American born Mexicana raised in México. Her father, mi abuelito, is of Spanish and French blood, born in Jerez, Zacatecas and lived in Durango and Juárez, MX and now resides in El Paso.

My father is a Chicano born and raised in El Paso, Tejas; puro indio el hombre. His mother was born in Dairy, NM and was Apache and Mexican. His father was also a Chicano of Mexican and Spanish blood. He was born and raised in El Paso, Tejas where my roots lay.

My father spoke perfect English and Spanish as a child. Knowing how rebelde he is, I'm sure he spoke Spanish in school despite the coscorenez he endured, probably on a daily basis. Cuando mi papa estaba chico y hablaba Español en las escuela, le pegaban en sus manos o en la cabeza con una regla. I too, know what it is like to speak in codes at will, so **they** don't understand, I do it all the time. No es mi culpa si no entienden lo que digo, de lo que hablo, lo mas natural, besides ignorancia is bliss, no? Today it is against the law and is called child abuse if you smack a kid on the hands or head with a ruler while at school, yet it still happens all the time. Quizas no con la regla pero con las miradas, their jestos, their risas y tratan de poner nos en ridiculo solamente porque no entienden de lo que hablamos.

Even if we did speak our words en Ingles what makes us think they would understand anyway? They don't live in our mundo, they have no concept, no entendimiento of what it is like to be trapped between two worlds. One of prejudice y el otro un mundo endonde vivimos que solo nosotros entendemos, our own sacred space.

Spanish was my first language, as it was for my mother, father and grandparents. I still recall my mother teaching me how to roll my R's as a little girl by the estufa while helping her make tortillas. She used to teach my sister and I to say: carrrrrrro, trrrrrrrren and then of course just the rrrrrrrrrrrrr which is almost second nature and comes in very handy when listening to mariachis at a wedding or quincanera. By the way this rolling of

Carmen Varela

This essay was presented as part of **corazón, mis pies**, an evening of queer Latina/o spoken word on love, migration & sustenance, March 20, 2001 at Resistencia Bookstore.

the rr's es una imposibilidad for those who don't speak the language, just ask any non-Spanish speaking person off the street to try it, they might think you're crazy but you will see

that my theory is accurate.

As we got older my father did not allow us to speak Spanish to my mother for quite some time. The reason was because she needed to learn to speak English. Even though she worked in the factories where everyone spoke Spanish, my father wanted better for her. When he caught us talking to her en Español, lo luego nos decia "hablen le a su madre en Ingles, o nunca va aprender". So we did, but we always snuck in the Spanish when he was not around. Today, she speaks and understands English. It is what people label it as broken English, but Ingles nonetheless with a heavy acento.

THIS SO CALLED

ACENTO

ACCENTUATES MY

CHICANES, MIS

MODOS DE SER

TODO LO QUE

VEZ Y OLLES

QUE SALE DE MI.

My acento. What acento? I never realized I even had one until I came here, that is to Austin. Some one once told me that when I spoke it was almost as if I was cantando a canción. Que bonito no? Some one also brought it to my atención that when I speak to my colleagues in my environment of academia, my acento slowly disappears. When they told me this, no sabia ni que decir. Que mortificación!!! I suppose

I just simply never realized or noticed, how could I? Why would I? I didn't even know I had one until some one pointed it out to me.

Since then, my self-listening skills have become super hyper-sensitive. Now every time I'm in a meeting or lo que sea, I catch my self listening to each and every word that pours out of my mouth, every inflection, every tono, I listen to hear si mis palabras cantan o no. When they don't, that is when I know, I know that I have unconsciously changed my manera of speaking porque somewhere deep down inside se that if I don't sound like them, I cannot ever really be a part of them that need for acceptance I suppose is what causes this. When they do hear my acento, I notice a subtle distorted, perplexed look on their faces, I'm sure you've seen it before. I always wonder what they are thinking of me as I speak: "But how?" "How could she be one of us?" "Where is she from?" My never verbalized response is: "Que tienes, nunca has ollido una hermosa canción? Quizas no, pos pobre!!!"

This so called acento accentuates my Chicanes, mis modos de ser todo lo que vez y olles que sale de mi. This acento is who I am, lo quien soy, una Chicana from the barrio, who has fought damn hard to be where she is at. Would it have been less difficult if I did not posses this so called acento? Quien sabe? The only thing I know is that it only gets better from here, because it doesn't matter how I sound when I speak or that I could never hide who I am, but simply because I know that inteligencia is not about the way you look or sound despite popular thought in **their** world.

INTEGRIDAD/INTEGRITY. What does this word imply? Is it not compromising ones cultural values by which one was taught to live by? Those unwritten rules which we all know exist but have never seen written or otherwise. Is it knowing who we are as a whole, that from where we came from, without forgetting? Forgetting our lenguaje, our past our struggles. Because to forget is to commit suicide, a kind of spiritual suicide, the worst kind. Preferia estar muerta que respirando y viviendo una mentira. Are the palabras that roll off this Chicana's tongue less worthy of integrity than that of another? No se me hace.

Con esto les digo que cuando hablen este lenguaje con que Dios nos a bendecido, digan las palabras recio, digan las fuertes y con orgullo sin vergüenza. Para que deberás se queden Con la Boca Abierta!!!!

a wo'mn called sir

written by

sharon bridgforth

copyright (c)2001

people often assume me to be a Black man and in some ways i am
but mostly i'm a Black butch
which to me is about gender identity/in combination with
energy sensibility style and Spirit.
for me to claim myself butch was a process
in fact the first time someone called me butch/i was deeply insulted.
for years i'd been called tomboy mannish a stud and sir/none of which was a bother
however
butches/in my mind
were white women who wanted to be men
and i ain't white
i've never wanted to be a man/and
i wasn't interested in engaging with women who wanted a woman to be a man
so to be called butch to me/was like being called an oreo.
i had to work through my initial response to the word because people kept using it as a label
to refer to me. during the process of working to understand why people
saw me/called me butch
a lot of things surfaced/like
i remembered being ten years old looking at the sears & roebuck's catalogue over and over
daydreaming about the outfits i wanted-all those great color coordinated boys' shorts and
tees that would be mine one day/when i had money.
i realized that as an adult i dreamt about stylish men's clothes i wanted to buy. and
it became clear that in my mind
my body was a man's body.
not because i wanted to be a man
but because i didn't see my body as a woman's/and couldn't imagine women's clothes
ever accurately expressing how i felt/inside which has caused many a fashion crisis.
my Black gurl hips and thighs don't look right in men's pants/my big woman titties don't
really work in men's shirts and even if i considered women's clothes something to dream
about-they always felt too small too short and too confining.
the gregory hines que suave/Coloured man sleek city gq look that was the me i saw/inside
was too phat for my wallet.
currently
thanks to inspiration from the traditional hip hoppers/i have released my afro wide legged
pants and hoop earring wearing seventies self still butch
still called sir
mannish
stud
and women/thinking i'm a Black man still
freak when they see me enter public bathrooms.

women have rarely spoken to me in public bathrooms/in fact
they often rush out when they see me come in
nervously try to direct me to the men's bathroom
or openly curse my existence with cutting eyes and curt body language.
but once/in dallas texas while i washed my hands in a bathroom at the mall
a mall attendant/an older very butch Black woman
walked in/stood next to me/stared at me in the mirror
and in a quiet voice said
*"light skinned as you are
and with that good hair/looking like you do
you can have any woman you wants.
can get them to give you money and things too if you know how."*
she then gave the counter a quick wipe

turned and walked away.

friendly advise i suppose/from one stud to another.

fortunately for me

i grew up surrounded by femme power/and in that environment grew into my butchness/
from the inside out.

although i have had to look at ways that i internalized sexism growing up

my butchness/my personal power has never been based on my ability to manipulate
physically overpower and control women.

i have always been surrounded by femmes/was raised by one my mother

single/migrated from the south to los angeles

her and all her friends were fierce femmes

come to the big city to make a new life. i adored these women/and they loved me

encouraged me to grow fully into myself

relieved i believe

that i was more interested in sneakers shorts and playing ball/than finding the path to
womanhood as they understood it.

although men were not intricately woven into my daily life/they were around

i watched them use their physical power/the privilege of their maleness

in efforts to control my mother and her friends.

i saw that the femmes out thought these men/played them for whatever points they
wanted/and envisioned/built and maintained their own lives

and the lives of their children

all while working/giving into/and sometimes being dominated by male ego and pride.

i saw myself more like those butch men than the femmes that raised me/but

i did not like the way the men underestimated talked down to and mistreated the femmes.

i understood that the very conservative south they had all fled from/was present somehow
within the confines of the female/male games they played

that these men had very little power outside of the homes they lived in and visited

and that jim crow had preceded my family west/imposing continued separate but not
equal housing education and employment opportunities.

living in this kind of reality

for the sake of survival

things get buried

unnamed

unspoken

forgotten

masked/and

forced to fit

things rot

get tossed out

boil over/burn

or simply evaporate.

i believe that i was born butch

but i did not have a name for myself until i was in my thirties

because words like lesbian feminist butch

were not in the language i heard growing up.

the naming of myself/butch gave me a lens to look through/a way to speak on
explore and understand my experiences and feelings.

i don't believe that i have to model my behavior after men. i believe that if men had the
freedom to be fearlessly who they are/if this world didn't punish the feminine
more men/and more butches would live inside their sensitivity

there'd be more of us speaking from our hearts/deeply feeling/willing and able to
communicate quickly clearly powerfully truthful.

but that is not the world we live in.

i am trying to learn/to model/to articulate

a new way to be butch

with all my heart.

so that i can release the man in me in a good way

in concert with my feminine self.

recently

an older femme island woman/a seer came up to me

said

"gurl

you was a man last life.

yes

but you was soooo bad to the womens

that they sent you back a woman this time yourself.

and you begged and pleaded/cause you didn't want to be no woman

but they said you had to be taught

so here you are

and thats why you got so much male energy

uhmmhum

yes.

so now i'm telling you

you better be nice to the womens.

are you nice to the womens! do you have a woman!

well

you better be nice.

else you gonna come back a woman again/next time."

yes ma'am

i'm trying

i'm trying to be nice to the womens.

and i'm trying to be nice to me/the woman the man the butch.

as a butch/i have often felt like i'm an easily identifiable lesbian-target for closeted and curious women looking to play. this used to upset me/until i admitted that i wasn't exactly turning the women away/more exactly i was choosing to be with these kinds of women/unavailable women/women who could not or would not love me completely and openly.

as a result

my heart was never not broken

i was always loving from a place of resentment.

deep down

i didn't think that i would ever find someone that would be with me

stay/and truly love me.

i realized that i carried shame everywhere i went

because there was a way that i was humiliated every day almost every place i went.

from public bathrooms to public stores/where people assuming me a young Black man

targeted their hate and mistrust of young Black men towards me

or people thinking me gay or lesbian targeted their heterosexism towards me

or people seeing me working class decided me not worthy of the time of day.

i remembered that as i grew older

from a tomboy to a woman/called sir

fear and embarrassment changed my mother's ability to love me unconditionally

and

i realized that i have carried the weight of my mother's disapproval/silently

unknowingly i have responded to her unspoken disappointment and shame

it has been the whisper of doubt/the murmur of guilt

the worrying reason/part of why

i've never looked in the mirror very often

i haven't lived in my own body completely

i have taken to heart butch-phobia/because

i am still

waiting for my mother's approval.

and i didn't even know it

until i turned don'tfuckwidmeforty

dared look in the mirror to question the passive way i love myself.

i had been waiting/i realized
to hear
you look good today
congratulations/you did great today daughter i'm so proud of you.
words that will probably never pass
from my mother to me.

i have been with my woman for almost six years now.
she is my match my opposite her femme rituals delight me/i
am stupefied by her perfume/the movement of her woman's body/her hair/the sound
of her
entering a room
the fit of her body/with mine.
i am forever captivated by the power of this femme woman/my teacher
she calls me handsome
tells me i done good
and loves me completely/as i am.

i call myself
butch lesbian woman/have given birth
love my womb which nurtured and held my child
but i am also deeply connected to the man in me/the energy that surrounds me
from the inside out
the sensibility Spirit and particular power that makes me butch.
there is a way that being butch/i am privy to a certain kind of male privilege in this man's
world/and am seemingly protected against some forms of violence that femmes face daily
men/on the street don't hurl sexual bullets at me i usually feel like i can be
heard in a conversation amongst men/or butches workmen look to me for
directives (when in fact my partner is the macha with the drill in our house)
waitstaff look at me to order/and to pay for meals when i'm out with my partner.
there is a way that living/butch
the daily facing of other people's fear resentment ignorance hate and misplaced desire/has
deepened the wound/my broken heart.
but slowly
love is healing me/giving me the space to more fully explore who i am/love is helping me
to love myself/to honor my own
heart
scars and all
and to live/from the inside out
in my
butchness.

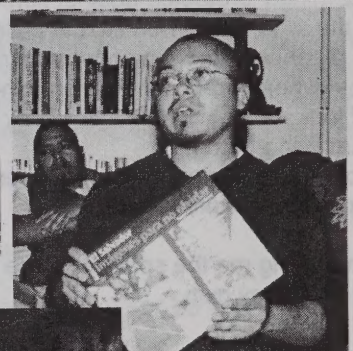
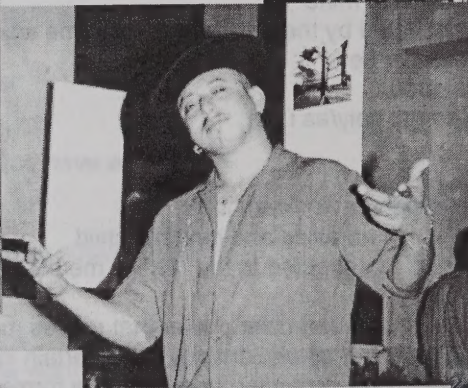
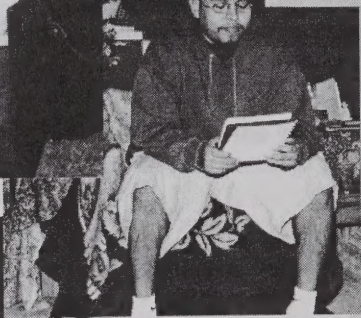
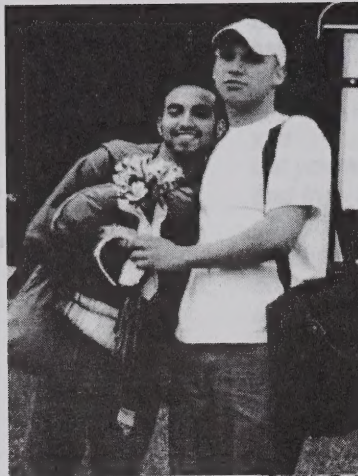
bio: sharon bridgforth

bridgforth is the author of *the bull-jean stories*; performance stories published by RedBone Press. *the bull-jean stories* received the 1998 Lambda Literary Award for best book by a small press. bridgforth has presented her work nationally since 1993. bridgforth is a 1999/2000 N.E.A./T.C.G. Playwright in Residence at Frontera @ Hyde Park Theatre; Her newest performance piece titled, *con flama*, received the Rockefeller Foundation Multi-Arts Production Fund Award in support of Frontera @ Hyde Park Theatre's premiere of *con flama* and the collaboration between bridgforth (playwright), Laurie Carlos (director) and Lourdes Perez (composer).

You can catch bridgforth's work in various anthologies including: **Does Your Mama Know?**, RedBone Press; **ReCREATIONS: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Queer People**, Q Press; **KenteCloth**, North Texas University Press 1997 ed.; **MA-KA:Diasporic Juks**, Sister Vision Press; and **Sinister Wisdom 58**.

bridgforth is dedicated to telling African-American wy'mn's stories/honoring Indigenous people/dealing with issues specific to Ancestors, elders, and homosexuals-based on the idea of the transmigration of Souls/using circular storytelling and non-linear verse to chronicle Life. though my work is for the page, the primary expression of my work is through performance using voice, movement, ritual, dramatic interpretation/and a collaborative process to bring the Work to Life.

bridgforth lives with her partner luz guerra/historian-anti oppression trainer/facilitator.
guerra and bridgforth have two teenagers, three dogs, and a cat. bridgforth dedicates
this piece to guerra/who helped her name her butchness and who edited the (many) early drafts of this work.





1715 E. 6TH ST. SUITE 112
AUSTIN, TX 78702
www.allgo.org

PHONE: 512-472-2001
FAX: 512-472-6301
MAIL: allgolnc@aol.com

AUSTIN LATINO/LATINA LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDER ORGANIZATION

April 16, 2001

Dear Compañeros/as,

It is with great honor and orgullo that we embrace the opportunity of this ¡ALLGO Pasa! issue to stand in solidarity with our hermana en la lucha, Alma Lopez.

Alma Lopez is a chicana lesbiana artist who uses digital images to express her vision, imaginación, corazón y voz. In her work, like many other latino/a artists she has incorporated powerful cultural images that she grew up with, in particular La Virgen de Guadalupe. It breaks my heart and enrages me to see the controversy that this has caused. There are those who feel that their understanding of La Virgen is the only moral one and in some way that entitles them to dictate Alma Lopez' relationship to La Virgen de Guadalupe.

As you will read more about in this issue and see on the cover, Alma has created an image of la Virgen in which Guadalupe is embodied and looking up rather than mysteriously cloaked and demurely looking down. The role of virgins in the history of Christianity has been one of bravery and rule breaking. Interestingly, many religious traditions have chosen to bury this history in images of submission and disembodied pseudo-purity. The trap of women having to be disembodied to have access to goodness is one of the major underpinnings of sexism. Humanity's longstanding love/hate relationship with women's desire and bodies has contributed to concepts of two classes of women: the kind that you marry and the kind that you have sex with. The kind that are good and the kind that are bad. This dichotomous thinking about women's bodies and desires that separates us from and negates our bodies and desires creates the cultural landscape that protects and fuels rape, sexual abuse and disconnection from each other and ourselves.

Like most Latinas, I was taught that good girls don't. Good girls don't want, desire, or demand. Good girls don't speak out, don't make people uncomfortable, don't need. Good girls don't make men aroused. The trap is, of course, that to be of value as a woman in our society you must be sexually desirable to men, however you can't be too sexually arousing to them or you are a tease, a slut, a woman to be fucked and left. The entire construction makes women responsible for how men respond to our bodies. This training has proven to be very successful in making many of us the ideal collaborators in our sexual victimization and making us feel responsible for it.

A small group of men led by Villegas in New Mexico have led a protest to Alma's art in an attempt to have her museum exhibit shut down. You will see in this issue Alma's own powerful words as she questions how these men must be looking at women's bodies to find evil and sacrilege in this image. She challenges their thinking that they have a right to decide what women can express through our art.

As a Latina continuing to navigate the sexism that permeates our society, I am beyond agradecida to Alma Lopez for having the courage to say through her art that I can be good and have a body. That I can be good and strong. That I can have a body that has nothing to do with men or their reactions to it. That I can have desire in relation to myself, in relation to other women, and men don't have to be a part of that. I am painfully aware that she is standing in the line of fire of sexism for me. For my right to my voice and my body. For my right to my relationship with my cultural images. For my right to my history. For my right to claim and create a cultural history that includes me. I also know she is fighting for every little girl coming after us to have the right to know that she is not responsible for how men respond to her body. And she does not have to accommodate those responses in any way. That her body and her desire is her own.

If Alma Lopez's art is silenced, this means that as women we do not have a right to our bodies, much less our voices. This means that our bodies, our thoughts, our desires are under men's purview. Villegas and his group are not fighting to protect a religious tradition, they are fighting to protect their right to dictate women's bodies and desires. They are fighting to continue to see us as evil temptresses that lead them away from God. It is time we demand that they take responsibility for their own desires and take their sick thoughts off our bodies.

This fight is not about an image hanging in a museum. This fight is about a woman's right to be an empowered, embodied, desiring human being and the right to create an art that expresses that power.

We hope you join us in solidarity with Alma Lopez, by writing response letters to the people listed on page 16 of this issue. We hope that you join us in supporting Alma's work to dismantle the sexism that robs us all of true liberation.

En la lucha,

Martha Duffer, Psy.D.
Executive Director

CON GANAS

a literary/arte revista of queer voz, vida y la verdad

is requesting poetry/ short fiction/ experimental & spoken palabra/ essays & other forms of visual expression utilizing text/ pushing the boundaries of literary arte

& addressing this tema:

ser chingona, ser chingón

[ser xingona, ser xingón]

our first issue will go 2 print early june 2001.

deadline 4 submissions is may 31, 2001. Pieces should be emailed [if possible] to allgoinc@aol.com, tho other arrangements 4 submitting yr work can be made. Compensation 4 sharing yr work in the first few issues will be 10 copies of the revista yr work is featured in [we will work 2 be able to pay out feria for future issues]

The vision for CON GANAS:

to (re)create & sustain spaces 4 expressions of queer literary arte/ to document oUr vidas/ speak oUr truths/ leave artifacts 4 future generations of joteria/ support literary artistas/ get oUr work oUt/ revolutionize cultura/ look 2 ourselves, community-based publishing & distribution, el cuerpo y la tierra as agents for transforming the World

CON GANAS is part of ¡viva arte, viva cultura! [cultural arte project of the allgo]. Fmi on ¡viva arte, viva cultura! or to learn more about allgo's work, check out our website at www.allgo.org or contact us at 512.472.2001/ allgoinc@aol.com

Diabl-ios

Devil boys Juan y Juan

Papis that strut down the calles sucias
littered with alley cats, corona bottles,
and other cochiñeras

waiting for someone to come by
either with cash or some coke

Down the street, between the bars
and the bathhouse

Down my street

Down the same street that my vecinos live on
figsando por las ventanas

Señora Rivas me hace caras when I take out the trash

She thinks I should be there with it
wrapped in white plastic lightly scented
maggot encrusted drawstring splendor

BASURA! she yells

Just because the Dos Juanes come to visit
when they're bored

When I'm bored

BASURA! me dice

Yeah, we play around in the backyard

Put the wet toothless alley cats in heat to shame

Then to the showers where we shave our heads

and our eyes water while shooting shaving cream loads
that slide down our piernas

to the clogging drain blocked
with pelitos and cum

then out to the the front porch
with the creek creek creek
of the old wooden floors

SIN BERUENZA! she yells

Fuck Señora Rivas, she aint nobody!

I can have as many putos over as I want
She needs to stop figsando through the ventanas
if she cant hang

Why is she looking through
the windows at 4 am anyways

LA SIN BERUENZA ERES TU, CABRONA!

I yell back at her

I can have their brown culero nalgas
el sabor de unos Mexicanos

I want some barrio love every now and then

I want their cholo ass and homeboy pussy
and play chicano tug of war with their cueros
and finger the inside of their skins

Mis chulos, uncut papis son primos
true cousins from the rumbo

Yo quiero mis dos Juanes

my piel morena

my bidi bidi bom bom

my amor a la mexicana

and I will, every saturday night
until they get busted

AGAIN!

los dos juanes

by MIG~PAB

**BECAUSE we have
answers
when you ask
WHAT NOW?**



One source for all your HIV medication needs

3810 Medical Parkway, 512.451.7100

1621 N. Main Ave., 210.222.8450

STATSCRIPT Pharmacy
HIV/AIDS SPECIALISTS FOR LIFE

Omar's Corner

Here they Go Again...

I have to give it to them. They are smart. Using the latest census data to pit Latinas/os against Black people is the most effective way to perpetuate the white male patriarchy that is known as the united states of amerikkka. Data was recently released that the u.s. Latina/o population increased by 58% between 1990 and 2000, amounting to a rough total of 35 million. By some estimates, the Latina/o population has surpassed the Black population. (This is not counting the thousands, if not millions, of undocumented Latina/o immigrants who did not report due to fears of deportation.) But instead of the possibility of forging and strengthening relationships between the two largest non-white groups in the united states, a divisive "us versus them" picture was painted in the news reports I read. This infuriated me. These are the same tactics that the pro-187 coalition used to get Black Californians to vote for Proposition 187 (California anti-immigrant referendum during mid-90s). They must have had huge smiles of satisfaction seeing the Black and Latina/o communities fight like stray dogs over a scrap of rancid meat. Our communities *cannot* give in to this brainwashing this time. Blacks and Latinas/os comprise a quarter of the u.s. population. If we mobilize our peoples, we can affect real change. We *can* start the revolution. ¡Si se puede! chuy...

Recently, I've had some debates with a good christian friend regarding christianity. As an ex-catholic, I had a lot to say. One of my major sources of contention is the fact that a lot of christians feel that it is their obligation to convert everyone to claiming chuy (aka jesus christ) as their savior. My friend says that's not so. Oh, really. Didn't everyone get that tape about jesus christ in the mail recently? That is harassment and just plain evil. How much money did that organization spend to produce, manufacture, and ship that propaganda? Probably millions of dollars. Money that could have fed and clothed people; built affordable housing; supplemented health

Ruth,

It's been two years since we rekindled our love. This is to celebrate our anniversary, love, happiness, and future commitment. I am thankful everyday you're in my life.

te quiero mucho mi amorcito,

—Liz



[OMAR'S CORNER cont'd]

insurance; the list is endless. In Los Angeles, a cathedral costing approximately \$165 million dollars is in the works. If that is not disgustingly decadent, then I don't know what is. I neither want nor need any biblical-based propaganda in my life. My spirituality is very unique and individual to me. Just look at the 500+ years of damage christianity has inflicted on Aztlán and the rest of Latin America. Indigenous peoples prayed to their own deities for thousands of years, long before chuy was supposedly crucified. The sheer arrogance of christians is both amazing and revolting. Tonantzin y Yemayá, por favor, protegeme de ese niño...

Amor

I've lived with hiv for eight years now. The possibility of finding THE ONE was a fading ideal. But Yemayá (Ashe) brought a little fishie (we're both Pisces) named Marlon I. Morales (see page 4) into my life. It would have been very easy for us never to have met. Fortunately, we recognized our connection immediately, and after a week together nos enamoramos. As two Latino males, we are not taught to recognize any of our emotions, let alone love. Even being queer doesn't help the case. More than a few people have doubted our love. Whether it was jealousy (you know who you are), skepticism, or genuine concern, I don't know. True love is rare enough. But between two queer Latino, dark-skinned, indigenous-looking, serodiscordant males? Our love is real and is revolutionary. te quiero, mi pescadito.

If you wanna respond to anything I've written, hit me at xicanoprieto@aol.com

PRIDE FANDANGO 01

GAY PRIDE CON SABOR!!

Saturday June 23, 2001

9 pm to 1 am

The Clubhouse

1109 S. Pleasant Valley Road

SALSA, MERENGUE, TEJANO, HIP-HOP, OLD SKOOL

SAVE
THE
DATE!!

WOW!! What a Turn-Out!!!

Brazo a Brazo Retreat Builds Community among Gay & Bisexual Latino Men

—Remi Vallejo

On March 16-18, 2001 we had our men's retreat, which we called Brazo A Brazo: Conociendome, Conociendote. It was a weekend to remember. We had thirteen people attend. We started out the first night by building an altar. Everyone brought two items that meant something to them. Some people shared family fotos, while others brought books, rosaries and flowers. The altar was a great because it gave all of us the opportunity to listen to everyone's feelings and emotions, which brought us closer to each other.

Alfonso Carlón, Marlon I. Morales, Joseph Acosta, Joe Jiménez, Omar González and Miguel García were some of the facilitators at the retreat. Marlon I. Morales talked about remembering, honoring and documenting our history and identities. Alfonso Carlón & Miguel García talked about embracing change: options & strategies for changing behavior. Joseph Acosta facilitated sessions on relationships with ourselves and with others. Joe Jiménez and Omar González did theirs on exploring sexual myths & identities. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves & left with a great feeling.

The retreat was very relaxing for me, I felt like everyone there was very supportive and understanding about all the issues discussed through out the weekend I became more in touch with my inner self and bonded with all thirteen people who attended. I learned a lot about the people around me and how everyone is different but yet the same in their own way. I would also like to thank everyone that help put it together and who attended, for making the retreat a memorable weekend.

For more info on ALLGO's Brazo a Brazo men's programs contact Omar or Remi at 472.2001.

!snap!

a weekly writing group
for queer people of
color

facilitated by
sharon bridgforth

april to august 2001
austin, tejas

call 472.2001 for details
\$75-\$150 sliding scale fee
requested

registration is limited
scholarships are available

!snap! is made possible by funding thru the
gill foundation, peace development fund,
funding exchange, private donations, corazón
& other forms of community support



Brazo a Brazo retreat participants

The following respuesta was delivered by Alma López at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, Nuevo México on April 4, 2001.

Respuesta

Amid patriarchal attacks on her work, threats
& church-organized attempts to censor her
voz, Chicana lesbian artist & revolucionaria
Alma López speaks back

inmate with Virgen tattoo on back)
La Guadalupana is a photo mural installation that was executed for the exhibition *Ida y Vuelta* at the Musée Denys-Puech at Rodez, France and later purchased by the New Mexico Museum of Fine Art. It is presently included opening exhibition "Somos La Luz" at the National Hispanic Arts Center of New Mexico. The image was conceived as statement on Colonialism and how this condition

has effected the Chicano Population. Just as colonial issues are obscured into the layered agendas of the contemporary environment, La Guadalupana also conveys plural meanings. More than twenty years ago, artists Yolanda Lopez and Ester Hernandez were threatened and attacked for portraying the Virgen in a feminist and liberating perspective.

New Mexico is a place where I have met some of the most wonderful, caring, and giving people who are now my friends. Many of my friends in New Mexico, California and everywhere did not want me to be here today because they love me and are afraid that I would be hurt. I chose to be here because I want you to see that I am a person with feelings and thoughts like you.

I was born in Mexico and grew up in California. My family would visit our aunts, uncles and cousins in Mexico at least once every two years because my parents felt it was important that we know as much as possible about our history and culture. In Mexico and in Los Angeles, the Virgen de Guadalupe was always in a special place where we would all see her protecting us and our home.

We are all here today to discuss one of my digital prints in the *Cyber Arte* exhibition which features four Chicana/Latina/Hispana artists who combine traditional cultural images with state of the art technology. Although I know that this is meant to be a community discussion, standing here I feel like I am on trial. I feel that I am being forced to defend myself as an artist and a woman.

The "offending" work titled "Our Lady" is a photo-based digital print on exhibition in a museum, and not an object of devotion in a church. It is an image that could possibly arouse conversations on topics such as use of cultural images in art or the use of technology as a tool for creative expression.

This work features two of my friends. Performance artist Raquel Salinas as a strong Virgen dressed in roses and cultural activist Raquel Gutierrez as a nude butterfly angel. The two Raqueles and I grew up in Los Angeles with the image of the Virgen in our homes and community. The Virgen is everywhere. She's on tattoos, stickers, posters, air freshener cans, shirts and corner store murals, as well as church walls. Many, including myself, feel that because she is everywhere there is nothing anyone can do to change how the original image of the Virgen de Guadalupe is generally perceived.

(Slide of Virgen mural)

Catholic or not, Chicana/Latina/Hispana visual, literary or performance artists grew up with the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe, therefore entitling us to express our relationship to her in any which way relevant to our own experiences. Many artists, such as Yolanda Lopez, Ester Hernandez, Santa Barraza, Delilah Montoya, Yreina Cervantez and Raquel Salinas have shared their own personal experiences using the Virgen de Guadalupe.

(Slide of Santa Barraza retablo with Virgen)

(Slide of Delilah Montoya Self Help Graphic photo based print of

Catholic or not,
Chicana/Latina/
Hispana visual,
literary or
performance
artists grew up
with the image
of the Virgen de
Guadalupe,
therefore
entitling us to
express our
relationship to
her in any which
way relevant to
our own
experiences.

(Slide of Yolanda Lopez "fem" Virgen)

Yolanda Lopez received bomb threats for her portrayal of the Virgen wearing low-heeled shoes. In this image the Virgen walks with her head bowed, hands clasped wearing a dress below the knee. I think that people were upset because the Virgen was able to walk.

The protest against my digital print "Our Lady" is organized and led by community activist Jose Villegas. New Mexico Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan has joined him, calling the artwork sacrilegious. Mr. Villegas' first and only attempt to communicate with me was through a threatening email. One week later, on television I saw the rally he organized against the museum.

Mr. Villegas and the Archbishop see the "Our Lady" digital print with exposed legs and belly, and a female angel's breasts as "offensive." Yet I know, that many churches, in Mexico and Europe and the United States, house images of nude male angels and most prominently, a Crucifixion practically naked except for a skimpy loincloth.

When I see "Our Lady" as well as the works portraying the Virgen by many Chicana artists, I see an alternative voice expressing the multiplicities of our lived realities. I see myself living a tradition of Chicanas who because of cultural and gender oppression, have asserted our voice. I see Chicanas creating a deep and meaningful connection to this revolutionary cultural female image who appeared to an indigenous person at a time of genocide, and an inspiration during liberation struggles such as the Mexican Revolution and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. I see Chicanas who understand faith.

Even if I look really hard at "Our Lady" and the works of many Chicana artists, I don't see what is so offensive. I see beautiful bodies that are gifts from our creator. Maybe because my mother breast-fed me as a baby, I see nurturing breasts. I see our strong nurturing mothers.

I am forced to wonder how men like Mr. Villegas and the Archbishop are looking at my work that they feel it is "blasphemy" and "the devil." I wonder how they see bodies of women. I wonder why they think that our bodies are so ugly and perverted that they cannot be seen in an art piece in a museum especially when nude or practically nude male bodies are seen in churches? I wonder why they are attacking me for

portraying a strong woman while protecting the sexual violence towards children and young women perpetrated by their own priests in their own churches? I wonder if those priests are ever brought to public trial like I am here today?

For me, this experience at times has been confusing and upsetting, primarily because a few men self-righteously believe that they have the authority to dictate how a particular image should be interpreted. They believe they can tell me how to think. I am a woman who has grown up with the Virgen. Who are these men to tell me how to relate to her?

Honestly, it scares me to see so many people organized to attack me. It makes me sad that this has been a divisive issue especially along gender lines, to see brothers and sisters fighting, and to see politicians trying to use this as an excuse to cut funds in art and education.

Even now, I don't want to personally attack Mr. Villegas. I admire his organizing skills especially since this has appeared in so many newspapers and television, not just here but in places like California, New York and Mexico City. However, as a community activists and I am sure, an admired member of his community, I wish his first contact with me would have been in the nature of an open dialogue with mutual consideration and respect for me as a member of the Chicano community. I wish that our community's intelligence and judgment had been respected instead of being asked to complain before even seeing my print.

Although, there are people who are offended by the "Our Lady" digital print, not everyone is offended and not everyone agrees that it should be removed. Emails, calls, and letters of support have included Catholics, Latinas/os, artists, educators, and various communities throughout the United States. This experience has also evoked an outpouring of positive feedback and support, which has affirmed my belief that there really isn't anything

wrong with this image. So many people have emailed me and contacted the museum expressing their concern over these attacks. I want to thank everyone who has been wonderfully supportive. I wish I could read all of their letters to you.

I hope that my digital print "Our Lady" is not removed from the exhibition. I know that not everyone likes my work, but no one person has the right to remove it and therefore prevent others from seeing it. This museum is an education institution like a university. This is not a church.

The Museum's funding nor directors should be threatened because I have exhibited a digital print. No one here has done anything wrong to be judged in the way we are being

Personally, I feel that if my work is removed it means that I have no right to express myself as an artist and a woman. It means that there must be something wrong and sexually perverted with our female bodies. It means that as Chicanas we can only be sexualized or only be virgins. It means that only men can tell us how to look at the Virgen. It means that we cannot look upon the Virgen as an image of a strong woman like us.

judged. I produced a print that relates to my own experience. Curator Tey Mariana Nunn's connection and commitment to community is obvious by her selection of four Chicana/Latina/Hispana artists. As a Chicana and community activist, Tey Mariana knows that women of color artists are continually marginalized and therefore rarely have opportunities to exhibit in museums. She is an important and loved member of our Chicana community. Directors Joyce Ice and Thomas Wilson, and the museum staff have demonstrated their commitment to exhibit work that reflects, educates and prompts dialogue in a civil society.

What happens to the rights of artists and curators to create and exhibit without censorship? What happens to the rights of community and audiences to be represented and intellectually respected? I feel that as artists and museums along with our friends and families, we need everyone to know that we are also taxpayers. We need to tell our political representatives that we also decide what to do with our vote and our money. We need to tell everyone that we oppose censorship, and funding cuts to art and education.

Personally, I feel that if my work is removed it means that I have no right to express myself as an artist and a woman. It means that there must be something wrong and sexually perverted with our female bodies. It means that as Chicanas we can only be sexualized or only be virgins. It means that only men can tell us how to look at the Virgen. It means that we cannot look upon the Virgen as an image of a strong woman like us.

Thank you.

Alma Lopez
Los Angeles, April 4, 2001

Alma López is a visual and public artist born in Sinaloa, Mexico and raised in Los Angeles. She earned a B.A. from UC Santa Barbara and a M.F.A. from UC Irvine. She exhibits her work extensively and has received numerous awards for her work including a 1997 Design Excellence in Public Art from the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department for a digital mural project; a 1997-99 California Arts Council residency grant; a 1998 COLA (City of Los Angeles) Individual Artist Grant; a 1998 Brody Fellowship for Visual Artists; and a 1999 Frontera-Ford Siqueiros-Pollock IV Binational Border Visual Art Award.

She is the director and co-founder of Homegirl Productions, a public art collaborative focusing on the chiasmus of African American and Chicana/o experiences; a co-founding member of L.A. Coyotas, a Chicana multidisciplinary artists collective; and co-founding member of Tongues, a new brown/black queer webzine. Currently, she continues her digital series on culture, gender and sexuality titled "Lupe & Sirena." She is the Promotions Manager for Bienestar Human Services, designs bookcovers for the University of Arizona Press, and is an artist in residence at the 18th Street Arts Complex.

Alma's digital images represent a new direction in Chicano art that is at once technological and aesthetic. She recontextualizes major icons of Mexican and Chicano cultures, bringing lesbian desire into relationship with nationalist myth, border culture, political economy, and the built environment. Her work basically states that if you cannot imagine someone or some group, then you will not see them. Her work seeks the new imagings that make social visibility possible. Alma López is a participating artist/scholar in ALLGO's Con la Boca Abierta program.

we are taught not to question and these are still the war years: images of the virgin mary

by jackie cuevas
(for alma lopez)

when i say
"the virgin mary"
what do you see?

a blue veil/mantilla
hands clasped in prayer
glowing light around her face
is there a baby jesus in the picture?

sometimes i see my mother's face
sometimes i see a mexican man
alone in a field
La Virgen appears in front of him
he drops to his knees in awe.
The next day he shares his vision
with his fellow villagers
but he fails to mention
that he was drunk on mezcal
and high on his favorite herb
at the time

centuries later
an artist in Aztlan
has a vision:
The Virgin Mary
struts her stuff
in a flowered bikini

some men balk: "you have no right to..."
"you don't own the Virgin Mary"

but the Virgin Mary
belonged to the people
before she was claimed
by the catholic church

perhaps one day
a corporation
will trademark her
The Virgin Mary™
(i can already see
a line of dolls:
Career Virgin Mary,
Malibu Virgin Mary, etc.)

Seriously, though, Alma Lopez has the
right, and the talent, to portray La Virgen
any way she chooses. She can worship
her, pray to her, love her, desire her, mock
her, paint her, dress like her, or spit on
her. She can have her own relationship
with her and depict it artistically. And she
deserves to share her artistic expressions
in community, with the support of
countless artists, writers, Catholics, non-
Catholics, and casual on-lookers.
Unfortunately, because of societal
boundaries around sexuality, sensuality,

desire, femininity, spirituality (and so on),
any artist who speaks her own truth to these
may come up against opposition/fear/
reactionism. But fortunately, through the
insistence of our artistic expressions—and
through collective action—innovative art like
that by Alma Lopez will continue to
challenge/transform the world we live in.

We as queers have been hurt by the catholic
church. Many of us who were raised
catholic struggle with the juxtaposition
between homophobic religious doctrine and
our desires/lives/realities as queers. It is
precisely through re-visioning, re-inventing—
even mocking—cultural and religious beliefs/
symbols/icons that we can discover our own
truths. By taking ownership of the symbol of
the Virgin Mary, an artist establishes her
own relationship with her and joins a
continuing dialogue with other artists who
question/portray La Virgen in their own
ways. By depicting La Virgen as a sexy-
powerful Latina, Alma claims her as her
own, re-invents her, frees her.

Dear Offended Catholic Chicano Activist
Man in New Mexico:

Are you threatened
because
she is
strong?
powerful?
Latina?
sexy?
a dyke?
all of the above?
is that why you think she "has no right"?

Another question, hermano:
How long will we keep fighting each other?
And
Why don't you use all that macho energy
to examine your own sexism
and that activist energy
to dismantle our shared oppressions?

[Note: The Virgin Mary is copyrighted 2001
by Jackie Cuevas. Anyone who utters the
words "Virgin Mary" or "La Virgen" or
variations thereof must send royalty
payments to me.]

[The opinions expressed here are not
necessarily the opinions of the editors or the
Virgin Mary.]

[May the Virgin Mary be with you.]

jackie cuevas is an Austin-based Chicana
dyke writer & artist/ she is the author of
otherhood, u.s.a./ her work entitled
"Images of the Virgin Mary" will be
featured in the forthcoming con ganas
literary/arte revista/ in addition, jackie
cuevas is a participating artist/scholar in
ALLGO's Con la Boca Abierta program.

It's not over. The meeting between
Museum representatives, censors and
Alma López/arte supporters has been
rescheduled for Monday, April 16 at
10am at Sweeney Center in Santa Fe.
(The room at the previous meeting was
not large enough to safely accommodate
everyone.) We still need your support.
Please email or contact the following:

1. Email the museum in support of artists
and museums' right to exhibit artwork.

jice@moifa.org (Dr. Joyce Ice, Director)

TMNunn@moifa.org (Dr. Tey Marianna
Nunn, Curator of Contemporary Hispano/
Latino Collections)

2. Email or call your friends, especially if
you have any who live in New
Mexico. Please ask them to see the
exhibition, write their comments down, let
someone at the museum know how they
felt about the exhibition. More
information at www.moifa.org or
(505) 476- 1200

3. Write a letter in support of Alma
López's work, the exhibition and the work
of curator Tey Marianna Nunn and the
museum staff. The letter should be
addressed to:

Thomas Wilson, Director
Museum of New Mexico
P.O. Box 2087
Santa Fe, NM 87501

And please cc the following:

Joyce Ice, Ph.D.
Tey Marianna Nunn, Ph.D.
Curator of Contemporary Hispano and
Latino collections
P.O. Box 2087
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Dr. Edson Way
Cultural Affairs Officer
Office of Cultural Affairs
La Villa Rivera Building
228 E. Palace
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505 827 6364

Alma Lopez
c/o Tongues/NIVA
1125 N. McCadden Place Suite 148
Los Angeles, CA 90038-1212

¡ALLGO PASA!

cultura/ arte/ jotería/ información
V17, No1



"OUR LADY," ALMA LÓPEZ

CONTENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2001

Co-Chairs: Silvia Bettez & Lucio Meza
 Secretary: José Orta
 Treasurer: Diana Gorham
 Members At-Large:
 Carmen Varela
 David Quinto
 Clemencia Zapata
 Stephanie Hebert
 Miguel García
 Jordana Barton

STAFF

Health Educators:
 Omar González, Rosa González,
 Lillie, Almanza, Remi Vallejo
 Coordinator of Support Services:
 Priscilla Hale, LMSW
 Case Managers:
 Liz Lopez & Carole Metellus
 Program & Fiscal Coordinator:
 Joe Jiménez
 En Nuestras Manos Program Coordinator:
 Ana Romes
 Executive Director:
 Martha Duffer, Psy. D.

ALLGO seeks to empower our community through political, educational, cultural, health, and social programming and services. We recognize that our struggle is linked to the struggle of all oppressed peoples and agree to always be in the forefront in the struggle against all forms of discrimination and oppression in order to transform the World.

ALLGO
 1715 E 6th Street, Suite 112
 Austin, Texas 78702
 512.472.2001
 Fax: 512.472.6301
 allgoinc@aol.com
 www.allgo.org

2 ALLGO PASA provides a space for sharing progressive visions/ ideas/ knowledge & arte. Sexist, racist, homophobic, violent, or oppressive pieces are not considered for publication. Inquiries, submissions, comments can be directed to ALLGO at the above address.

Spring 01

¡allgo pasa!

free HIV testing at ALLGO
 confidential or anonymous
 Mondays 4—8 pm
 call 469.2119 to make an appt

COVER
 "Our Lady" by Alma López
 Models: Raquel Gutierrez & Raquel Salinas

COVER/

"Our Lady"
 Arte by Alma López

3

Making La Trensa: A Vision for ALLGO's Future
 Joe Jiménez Explains How ALLGO Se Esta Transformando

PALABRAS/

4

Have You Seen My Brother?
 Marlon I. Morales

maya/olmec/xicano/salvadoreño/indigeno love
 Omar González

5

Mi Lenguaje, Mi Orgullo
 Carmen Varela Affirms Su Acento

6

a wo'mn called sir
 sharon bridgforth

11

los dos juanes
 MIG~PAB

14

Respuesta
 Amid Patriarchal Attacks on Her Work, Threats & Censorship
 Attempts, Alma López Speaks Back

16

we are taught not to question and these are still the war years:
 images of the virgin mary
 jackie cuevas

LO QUE 'STA PASANDO/

11 CON GANAS

Call for Submissions for allgo's literary/arte revista

12 Omar's Corner

Omar González Speaks Out on the Census, the Church y Su Amor

13 !snap!

ALLGO Sponsors Weekly Writing Workshop for Queer People of Color, led by sharon bridgforth

Remi Vallejo On Building Community at Brazo a Brazo, ALLGO's Gay & Bisexual Latino Men's Retreat

Making La Trensa: A Vision for ALLGO's Future

In thinking of how to represent in text the movement ALLGO is engaged in, I begin to think about what it is exactly that ALLGO provides gente. When I think of what ALLGO provides gente, I stop for a moment & recognize the immensity of what we endeavor—to provide health, social, educational, political programs & servicios to lesbianas, gays, bisexuals & transgenders, to Raza, to people of color, to artists, to people living with HIV/AIDS, to working class gente and those of us living in poverty, to many diverse members of Austin's comunidad. People come to ALLGO for many reasons—for case management, the Brazo a Brazo men's programs, the Con la Boca Abierta pláticas, artist development workshops, our spoken word events, and Baile de Amor, por ejemplo. I don't believe it's oversimplifying the case to say that ALLGO provides for nosotras/os.

Nosotras/os. I think of this piece of our work, the oftentimes overlooked or understated realness of what we do—working against the monsters of structured inequality & oppression in order to make *our* lives better, a collective effort to transform the World within our everyday realities. Cuidando/ apoyando/ ayudando/ abrazando/ nosotras/os—these feelings/actions are the impetus for so much change. I believe with all my heart that our work must be by, for and about Us, in the same way that we must support, share, connect with and learn from the by, for, about work being done by other comunidades.

One of the earliest memories I have of queer Latina/o organizing is a voz, a beautifully profound Tejana voice. I was 19, I was at a LLEGÓ work group, and I got to hear María Limón speak about the need for our lgbt Latina/o work. This was 1996 and the group was responding to many white people's claims that queer people of color doing work focused on our communities was divisive, "reverse racism," discriminatory—we are *not separating to divide*, María said, *we are separating to be specific*. Truth: we are here to affirm ourselves.

Like a spiritual tattoo, a birthmark/ mantra or the heart of my heart, María Limón's words have always been with me. For me, it is about affirmation—about living and not having our bodies/ideas/desires/histories contested, dismissed or devalued. It is about poder y lo nuestro. It is about shared history, common language, collective vision and responsabilidad. And I believe that what I bring to ALLGO is precisely what María Limón spoke about that day. I believe my work collectively works with the immeasurable contributions of our many volunteers, our staff, board members, and the people who have

given so much of themselves throughout the years. I believe my/our work mixes with 500+ years of resistance—that creating programs at ALLGO is as critical to the liberation of our gente, of all gente as the work of Cesar Chavez, the arte of Alma López, the drag queens and transies who threw rocks at abusive police forces at stonewall, as important to liberation movement as the gente of Vieques who stand up against the assaults of the U.S. military.

Informe-VIDA

For me, poder is about accumulation is about organizing comunidades is about justicia and resistencia. It is about looking to our past to reconstruct our future hoy. With these notions of comunidad & cambio in mind, I share this cuento—that in its sum, ALLGO will be many things to many people, but it can never be all things to all people. ALLGO is but one molecule in a big bang of revolución. And as part of this big bang, ALLGO will always commit itself to rethinking the work we do as a way to keep ourselves in check.

Are we really working towards our mission?? Is ALLGO the best place to give people HIV/AIDS services?? Who should our programs serve?? And what are the stakes of these decisions??

In fall 1999, ALLGO Board and Staff considered these questions, and out of our discussions came a vision for our future. We call it *la trensa*. Three projects: **Informe-VIDA**, prevention and early detection health education for our comunidades as well as treatment advocacy and resource linkages for those of us living with life-threatening and/or chronic health conditions, such as HIV/AIDS, diabetes, breast cancer,

instance, integrate goals of Informe-VIDA—men living healthier vidas, making informed decisions about our health and well-being—with goals of ALMA—bringing our comunidad together, connecting, sharing history, knowledge, nurturing consciousness. Our Con la Boca Abierta programs—the pláticas, cenas, cafecitos exploring history and memoria, Chicana lesbian literature, technology and arte, etc.—fulfill multiple goals of our three projects. The image of a trensa reflects the interconnectedness of our efforts/ like our lives/ their inseparability/ the corazón/liver/ lung/ piel that is our comprehensive approach to improving our vidas, improving our comunidad.

Our efforts over the coming years reflect the work of the past 16 years and before. Using as a foundation the work of Informe-SIDA, the tradiciones of Día de los Muertos and Baile de Amor, Día de la Raza, the

¡VIVA ARTE, VIVA CULTURA!

role of ¡ALLGO Pasa!, Pláticas Lesbicas and Entre Amigos in the survival of our comunidad, we recreate a future where we were not meant to survive, much less thrive, care for ourselves, desire and connect. Our efforts reflect these commitments—in 2001 ALLGO responds to the need for breast cancer awareness among lesbianas of color by creating **en nuestras manos...in our hands**; we begin an Artist in Residence program creating opportunities for our comunidades to work with sharon bridgforth, Alma López, Marlon I.

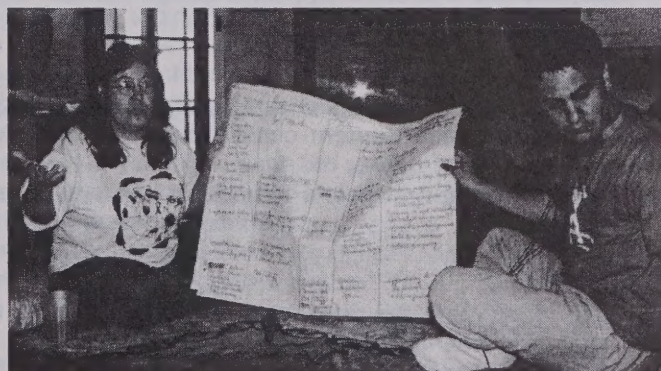
Morales. We hope that in fifteen years the work we are doing today will provide a foundation for new growth, for regeneration. These are the artifacts/ imprints/ echoes we leave behind.

ALMA

AMOR LATINIDAD MOVIMIENTO Y ACCIÓN

and heart disease; **ALMA**, acts of **Amor Latinidad Movimiento y Acción**, a home for community-building and political action, a home for lo nuestro/ the soul of allgo's programs; and finally, **¡Viva Arte, Viva Cultura!**, our efforts to preserve queer Latina/o cultura and arte. Each project weaving into the work of the others, working collectively to create/ resist/ document/ survive/ enjoy.

It would be impossible to say one program belongs solely to one project. The Brazo a Brazo programs for queer hombres, for



Martha Duffer & David Quinto discuss ALLGO's future during Board/Staff retreat.

el arte
del
corazón
es arte
del
pueblo/
el arte del
pueblo
es el
corazón
del arte

Have you seen my brother?

(San Salvador, 2000)

Have you seen my brother? (with urgency)

No, he did not ask me like that.

He was more subtle but still
There are things eyes cannot hide.

He looked deep into me
Hoping LA is small enough.

There is a name buried into my memory
Burned into me by a desperate look into me.

*Have you seen my brother?
I've lost touch.*

Images of forgotten graves along the border—haunting me
Images of unmarked shallow graves—haunting me
Images of brown bodies covered up
by INS officials and border ranchers—haunting me
Images of tortured, raped, enslaved, beaten down bodies—haunting me
No one is looking for them, will ever remember them
Along the border—haunting me.

*Have you seen my brother?
I've lost touch.*

He looked deep into me
Hoping LA is small enough.

San Salvador is miles away but I'm
now looking.

And I hope LA is small enough
And I hope I find his brother.

Marlon I. Morales

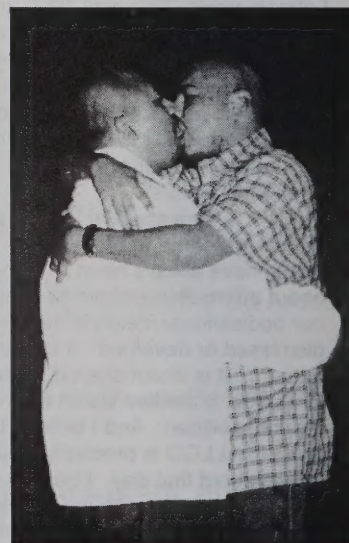
maya/olmec/xicano/salvadoreño/indigeno love

Omar González

pa mi papito,

Marlon I. Morales

I remember you from 500 or so years ago...
I have the memory of your eyes looking straight into my soul and our past life...
You recognized me from some ancient rain forest long since paved over...
maya/olmec/xicano/salvadoreño/indigeno timeless....destino....next time there will be no
smallpox, no hiv to distract us, to get in our way...me entregaré en ti...skin on skin...no
barriers, latex, lenguaje, or any other...we will nourish each other...you used your
indigenous medicinal magic extracted from yerbas long since extinct to sustain me...for
awhile...but not even all the corn, pyramid, & sea goddesses could save me from the
scourge brought here from christianeurocivilization....when i passed into the next cycle of
life...you vowed to meet me again....is that what we saw in each other's eyes...memories of
ancient civilizations ancient peoples ancient tongues ancient rituals ancient existences....
and a longing...a longing and yearning so deep and profound that palabras no puedan
describirlo....and though you won't be able to save me from the current scourge...i will
succumb to hiv and Yemayá will stroke my body with her waves...will bathe me in her cariño
and will rid me of this pestilence...she will comfort me and reassure me that we WILL meet
again and that next time our love will be fully realized...and I will wait for you...impatiently....
but in a split second I will recognize a millenium's worth of memories in your burnt cienna
colored eyes



omar & marlon mackin'



1715 E. 6TH ST. SUITE 112
AUSTIN, TX 78702
www.allgo.org

PHONE: 512-472-2001
FAX: 512-472-6301
MAIL: allgoinc@aol.com

AUSTIN LATINO/LATINA LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDER ORGANIZATION

April 16, 2001

Dear Compañeros/as,

It is with great honor and orgullo that we embrace the opportunity of this ¡ALLGO Pasa! issue to stand in solidarity with our hermana en la lucha, Alma Lopez.

Alma Lopez is a chicana lesbiana artist who uses digital images to express her vision, imaginación, corazón y voz. In her work, like many other latino/a artists she has incorporated powerful cultural images that she grew up with, in particular La Virgen de Guadalupe. It breaks my heart and enrages me to see the controversy that this has caused. There are those who feel that their understanding of La Virgen is the only moral one and in some way that entitles them to dictate Alma Lopez' relationship to La Virgen de Guadalupe.

As you will read more about in this issue and see on the cover, Alma has created an image of la Virgen in which Guadalupe is embodied and looking up rather than mysteriously cloaked and demurely looking down. The role of virgens in the history of Christianity has been one of bravery and rule breaking. Interestingly, many religious traditions have chosen to bury this history in images of submission and disembodied pseudo-purity. The trap of women having to be disembodied to have access to goodness is one of the major underpinnings of sexism. Humanity's longstanding love/hate relationship with women's desire and bodies has contributed to concepts of two classes of women: the kind that you marry and the kind that you have sex with. The kind that are good and the kind that are bad. This dichotomous thinking about women's bodies and desires that separates us from and negates our bodies and desires creates the cultural landscape that protects and fuels rape, sexual abuse and disconnection from each other and ourselves.

Like most Latinas, I was taught that good girls don't. Good girls don't want, desire, or demand. Good girls don't speak out, don't make people uncomfortable, don't need. Good girls don't make men aroused. The trap is, of course, that to be of value as a woman in our society you must be sexually desirable to men, however you can't be too sexually arousing to them or you are a tease, a slut, a woman to be fucked and left. The entire construction makes women responsible for how men respond to our bodies. This training has proven to be very successful in making many of us the ideal collaborators in our sexual victimization and making us feel responsible for it.

A small group of men led by Villegas in New Mexico have led a protest to Alma's art in an attempt to have her museum exhibit shut down. You will see in this issue Alma's own powerful words as she questions how these men must be looking at women's bodies to find evil and sacrilege in this image. She challenges their thinking that they have a right to decide what women can express through our art.

As a Latina continuing to navigate the sexism that permeates our society, I am beyond agradecida to Alma Lopez for having the courage to say through her art that I can be good and have a body. That I can be good and strong. That I can have a body that has nothing to do with men or their reactions to it. That I can have desire in relation to myself, in relation to other women, and men don't have to be a part of that. I am painfully aware that she is standing in the line of fire of sexism for me. For my right to my voice and my body. For my right to my relationship with my cultural images. For my right to my history. For my right to claim and create a cultural history that includes me. I also know she is fighting for every little girl coming after us to have the right to know that she is not responsible for how men respond to her body. And she does not have to accommodate those responses in any way. That her body and her desire is her own.

If Alma Lopez's art is silenced, this means that as women we do not have a right to our bodies, much less our voices. This means that our bodies, our thoughts, our desires are under men's purview. Villegas and his group are not fighting to protect a religious tradition, they are fighting to protect their right to dictate women's bodies and desires. They are fighting to continue to see us as evil temptresses that lead them away from God. It is time we demand that they take responsibility for their own desires and take their sick thoughts off our bodies.

This fight is not about an image hanging in a museum. This fight is about a woman's right to be an empowered, embodied, desiring human being and the right to create an art that expresses that power.

We hope you join us in solidarity with Alma Lopez, by writing response letters to the people listed on page 16 of this issue. We hope that you join us in supporting Alma's work to dismantle the sexism that robs us all of true liberation.

En la lucha,

Martha Duffer, Psy.D.
Executive Director

Mi Lenguaje, Mi Orgullo

This next piece I wrote is about language. It came about after having a conversation with a friend of mine where we began to discuss the colonization of our mother tongue. We talked about our lenguaje and the validity of it or lack thereof. As some time passed, I mentioned this topic to my lover, who then pointed out my accento and its fluctuation from Chicana to almost white depending on the situation and environment. This caused me to think and reflect about my language, my history, about myself. I thought about my lineage, how my parents taught each and every one of us to speak Spanish, and how in my own family I have seen one of my own siblings voltear la cara to her cultura, her language. She now seems content to have conformed to the ways of that which we fight so hard to not be.

Nunca has pensado que fueron las primeras palabras que escuchastes cuando llegastes a este mundo? Yo se que las que yo oye vinieron de la lengua Mexicana de me madre y eran "que bonita muchachita." They couldn't have been more right. Mi madrecita no hablaba ni una palabra de Ingles. Su piel blanca, sus ojos verdes, sus cabello claro pero su lenguaje puro Mexicano.

My mestizaje is an interesting one, uno mezclado and one I am very proud of. My mother was born in Durango México and lived there until the ripe age of 17 when she then joined her brothers and sisters whom she had never met in El Paso, Texas. My mother's mother was an American born Mexicana raised in México. Her father, mi abuelito, is of Spanish and French blood, born in Jerez, Zacatecas and lived in Durango and Juárez, MX and now resides in El Paso.

My father is a Chicano born and raised in El Paso, Texas; puro indio el hombre. His mother was born in Dairy, NM and was Apache and Mexican. His father was also a Chicano of Mexican and Spanish blood. He was born and raised in El Paso, Texas where my roots lay.

My father spoke perfect English and Spanish as a child. Knowing how rebelde he is, I'm sure he spoke Spanish in school despite the coscorenez he endured, probably on a daily basis. Cuando mi papa estaba chico y hablaba Español en las escuela, le pegaban en sus manos o en la cabeza con una regla. I too, know what it is like to speak in codes at will, so **they** don't understand, I do it all the time. No es mi culpa si no entienden lo que digo, de lo que hablo, lo mas natural, besides ignorancia is bliss, no? Today it is against the law and is called child abuse if you smack a kid on the hands or head with a ruler while at school, yet it still happens all the time. Quizas no con la regla pero con las miradas, their jestos, their risas y tratan de poner nos en ridiculo solamente porque no entienden de lo que hablamos.

Even if we did speak our words en Ingles what makes us think they would understand anyway? They don't live in our mundo, they have no concept, no entendimiento of what it is like to be trapped between two worlds. One of prejudice y el otro un mundo endonde vivimos que solo nosotros entendemos, our own sacred space.

Spanish was my first language, as it was for my mother, father and grandparents. I still recall my mother teaching me how to roll my R's as a little girl by the estufa while helping her make tortillas. She used to teach my sister and I to say: carrrrrrro, trrrrrren, trrrrrres and then of course just the trrrrrrrrrrrrr which is almost second nature and comes in very handy when listening to mariachis at a wedding or quincanera. By the way this rolling of

Carmen Varela

This essay was presented as part of **corazón, mis pies**, an evening of queer Latina/o spoken word on love, migration & sustenance, March 20, 2001 at Resistencia Bookstore.

the rr's es una imposibilidad for those who don't speak the language, just ask any non-Spanish speaking person off the street to try it, they might think you're crazy but you will see

that my theory is accurate.

As we got older my father did not allow us to speak Spanish to my mother for quite some time. The reason was because she needed to learn to speak English. Even though she worked in the factories where everyone spoke Spanish, my father wanted better for her. When he caught us talking to her en Español, lo luego nos decia "hablen le a su madre en Ingles, o nunca va aprender". So we did, but we always snuck in the Spanish when he was not around. Today, she speaks and understands English. It is what people label it as broken English, but Ingles nonetheless with a heavy acento.

THIS SO CALLED

ACENTO

ACCENTUATES MY
CHICANES, MIS
MODOS DE SER
TODO LO QUE
VEZ Y OLLES
QUE SALE DE MI.

I just simply never realized or noticed, how could I? Why would I? I didn't even know I had one until some one pointed it out to me.

Since then, my self-listening skills have become super hyper-sensitive. Now every time I'm in a meeting or lo que sea, I catch my self listening to each and every word that pours out of my mouth, every inflection, every tono, I listen to hear si mis palabras cantan o no. When they don't, that is when I know, I know that I have unconsciously changed my manera of speaking porque somewhere deep down inside se that if I don't sound like them, I cannot ever really be a part of them that need for acceptance I suppose is what causes this. When they do hear my acento, I notice a subtle distorted, perplexed look on their faces, I'm sure you've seen it before. I always wonder what they are thinking of me as I speak: "But how?" "How could she be one of us?" "Where is she from?" My never verbalized response is: "Que tienes, nunca has ollido una hermosa canción? Quizas no, pos pobre!!!"

This so called acento accentuates my Chicanes, mis modos de ser todo lo que vez y olles que sale de mi. This acento is who I am, lo quien soy, una Chicana from the barrio, who has fought damn hard to be where she is at. Would it have been less difficult if I did not posses this so called acento? Quien sabe? The only thing I know is that it only gets better from here, because it doesn't matter how I sound when I speak or that I could never hide who I am, but simply because I know that intelligencia is not about the way you look or sound despite popular thought in **their** world.

INTEGRIDAD/INTEGRITY. What does this word imply? Is it not compromising ones cultural values by which one was taught to live by? Those unwritten rules which we all know exist but have never seen written or otherwise. Is it knowing who we are as a whole, that from where we came from, without forgetting? Forgetting our lenguaje, our past our struggles. Because to forget is to commit suicide, a kind of spiritual suicide, the worst kind. Prefería estar muerta que respirando y viviendo una mentira. Are the palabras that roll off of this Chicana's tongue less worthy of integrity than that of another? No se me hace.

Con esto les digo que cuando hablen este lenguaje con que Dios nos a bendecido, digan las palabras recio, digan las fuertes y con orgullo sin vergüenza. Para que deberás se queden Con la Boca Abierta!!!!

a wo'mn called sir

written by
sharon bridgforth
copyright (c)2001

people often assume me to be a Black man and in some ways i am
but mostly i'm a Black butch
which to me is about gender identity/in combination with
energy sensibility style and Spirit.
for me to claim myself butch was a process
in fact the first time someone called me butch/i was deeply insulted.
for years i'd been called tomboy mannish a stud and sir/none of which was a bother
however
butches/in my mind
were white women who wanted to be men
and i ain't white
i've never wanted to be a man/and
i wasn't interested in engaging with women who wanted a woman to be a man
so to be called butch to me/was like being called an oreo.
i had to work through my initial response to the word because people kept using it as a label
to refer to me. during the process of working to understand why people
saw me/called me butch
a lot of things surfaced/like
i remembered being ten years old looking at the sears & roebuck's catalogue over and over
daydreaming about the outfits i wanted-all those great color coordinated boys' shorts and
tees that would be mine one day/when i had money.
i realized that as an adult i dreamt about stylish men's clothes i wanted to buy. and
it became clear that in my mind
my body was a man's body.
not because i wanted to be a man
but because i didn't see my body as a woman's/and couldn't imagine women's clothes
ever accurately expressing how i felt/inside which has caused many a fashion crisis.
my Black gurl hips and thighs don't look right in men's pants/my big woman titties don't
really work in men's shirts and even if i considered women's clothes something to dream
about-they always felt too small too short and too confining.
the gregory hines que suave/Coloured man sleek city gq look that was the me i saw/inside
was too phat for my wallet.
currently
thanks to inspiration from the traditional hip hoppers/i have released my afro wide legged
pants and hoop earring wearing seventies self still butch
still called sir
mannish
stud
and women/thinking i'm a Black man still
freak when they see me enter public bathrooms.

women have rarely spoken to me in public bathrooms/in fact
they often rush out when they see me come in
nervously try to direct me to the men's bathroom
or openly curse my existence with cutting eyes and curt body language.
but once/in dallas texas while i washed my hands in a bathroom at the mall
a mall attendant/an older very butch Black woman
walked in/stood next to me/stared at me in the mirror
and in a quiet voice said
"light skinned as you are
and with that good hair/looking like you do
you can have any woman you wants.
can get them to give you money and things too if you know how."
she then gave the counter a quick wipe

turned and walked away.
friendly advise i suppose/from one stud to another.
fortunately for me
i grew up surrounded by femme power/and in that environment grew into my butchness/
from the inside out.
although i have had to look at ways that i internalized sexism growing up
my butchness/my personal power has never been based on my ability to manipulate
physically overpower and control women.

i have always been surrounded by femmes/was raised by one my mother
single/migrated from the south to los angeles
her and all her friends were fierce femmes
come to the big city to make a new life. i adored these women/and they loved me
encouraged me to grow fully into myself
relieved i believe
that i was more interested in sneakers shorts and playing ball/than finding the path to
womanhood as they understood it.
although men were not intricately woven into my daily life/they were around
i watched them use their physical power/the privilege of their maleness
in efforts to control my mother and her friends.
i saw that the femmes out thought these men/played them for whatever points they
wanted/and envisioned/built and maintained their own lives
and the lives of their children
all while working/giving into/and sometimes being dominated by male ego and pride.
i saw myself more like those butch men than the femmes that raised me/but
i did not like the way the men underestimated talked down to and mistreated the femmes.
i understood that the very conservative south they had all fled from/was present somehow
within the confines of the female/male games they played
that these men had very little power outside of the homes they lived in and visited
and that jim crow had preceded my family west/imposing continued separate but not
equal housing education and employment opportunities.
living in this kind of reality
for the sake of survival
things get buried
unnamed
unspoken
forgotten
masked/and
forced to fit
things rot
get tossed out
boil over/burn
or simply evaporate.

i believe that i was born butch
but i did not have a name for myself until i was in my thirties
because words like lesbian feminist butch
were not in the language i heard growing up.
the naming of myself/butch gave me a lens to look through/a way to speak on
explore and understand my experiences and feelings.
i don't believe that i have to model my behavior after men. i believe that if men had the
freedom to be fearlessly who they are/if this world didn't punish the feminine
more men/and more butches would live inside their sensitivity
there'd be more of us speaking from our hearts/deeply feeling/willing and able to
communicate quickly clearly powerfully truthful.
but that is not the world we live in.
i am trying to learn/to model/to articulate
a new way to be butch
with all my heart.
so that i can release the man in me in a good way

in concert with my feminine self.

recently
an older femme island woman/a seer came up to me
said
"gurl
you was a man last life.
yes
but you was soooo bad to the womens
that they sent you back a woman this time yourself.
and you begged and pleaded/cause you didn't want to be no woman
but they said you had to be taught
so here you are
and thats why you got so much male energy
uhmmhum
yes.
so now i'm telling you
you better be nice to the womens.
are you nice to the womens! do you have a woman!
well
you better be nice.
else you gonna come back a woman again/next time."
yes ma'am
i'm trying
i'm trying to be nice to the womens.
and i'm trying to be nice to me/the woman the man the butch.

as a butch/i have often felt like i'm an easily identifiable lesbian-target for closeted and curious women looking to play. this used to upset me/until i admitted that i wasn't exactly turning the women away/more exactly i was choosing to be with these kinds of women/unavailable women/women who could not or would not love me completely and openly.

as a result
my heart was never not broken
i was always loving from a place of resentment.
deep down
i didn't think that i would ever find someone that would be with me
stay/and truly love me.
i realized that i carried shame everywhere i went
because there was a way that i was humiliated every day almost every place i went.
from public bathrooms to public stores/where people assuming me a young Black man targeted their hate and mistrust of young Black men towards me
or people thinking me gay or lesbian targeted their heterosexism towards me
or people seeing me working class decided me not worthy of the time of day.
i remembered that as i grew older
from a tomboy to a woman/called sir
fear and embarrassment changed my mother's ability to love me unconditionally
and
i realized that i have carried the weight of my mother's disapproval/silently unknowingly i have responded to her unspoken disappointment and shame
it has been the whisper of doubt/the murmur of guilt
the worrying reason/part of why
i've never looked in the mirror very often
i haven't lived in my own body completely
i have taken to heart butch-phobia/because
i am still
waiting for my mother's approval.
and i didn't even know it
until i turned don'tfuckwidmeforty
dared look in the mirror to question the passive way i love myself.

i had been waiting/i realized
to hear
you look good today
congratulations/you did great today daughter i'm so proud of you.
words that will probably never pass
from my mother to me.

i have been with my woman for almost six years now.
she is my match my opposite her femme rituals delight me/i
am stupefied by her perfume/the movement of her woman's body/her hair/the sound
of her
entering a room
the fit of her body/with mine.
i am forever captivated by the power of this femme woman/my teacher
she calls me handsome
tells me i done good
and loves me completely/as i am.

i call myself
butch lesbian woman/have given birth
love my womb which nurtured and held my child
but i am also deeply connected to the man in me/the energy that surrounds me
from the inside out
the sensibility Spirit and particular power that makes me butch.
there is a way that being butch/i am privy to a certain kind of male privilege in this man's
world/and am seemingly protected against some forms of violence that femmes face daily
men/on the street don't hurl sexual bullets at me i usually feel like i can be
heard in a conversation amongst men/or butches workmen look to me for
directives (when in fact my partner is the macha with the drill in our house)
waitstaff look at me to order/and to pay for meals when i'm out with my partner.
there is a way that living/butch
the daily facing of other people's fear resentment ignorance hate and misplaced desire/has
deepened the wound/my broken heart.
but slowly
love is healing me/giving me the space to more fully explore who i am/love is helping me
to love myself/to honor my own
heart
scars and all
and to live/from the inside out
in my
butchness.

bio: sharon bridgforth

bridgforth is the author of *the bull-jean stories*; performance stories published by RedBone Press. *the bull-jean stories* received the 1998 Lambda Literary Award for best book by a small press. bridgforth has presented her work nationally since 1993. bridgforth is a 1999/2000 N.E.A./T.C.G. Playwright in Residence at Frontera @ Hyde Park Theatre; Her newest performance piece titled, *con flama*, received the Rockefeller Foundation Multi-Arts Production Fund Award in support of Frontera @ Hyde Park Theatre's premiere of *con flama* and the collaboration between bridgforth (playwright), Laurie Carlos (director) and Lourdes Perez (composer).

You can catch bridgforth's work in various anthologies including: **Does Your Mama Know?**, RedBone Press; **ReCREATIONS: Religion and Spirituality in the Lives of Queer People**, Q Press; **KenteCloth**, North Texas University Press 1997 ed.; **MA-KA:Diasporic Juks**, Sister Vision Press; and **Sinister Wisdom 58**.

bridgforth is dedicated to telling African-American wy'mn's stories/honoring Indigenous people/dealing with issues specific to Ancestors, elders, and homosexuals-based on the idea of the transmigration of Souls/using circular storytelling and non-linear verse to chronicle Life. though my work is for the page, the primary expression of my work is through performance using voice, movement, ritual, dramatic interpretation/and a collaborative process to bring the Work to Life.

bridgforth lives with her partner luz guerra/historian-anti oppression trainer/facilitator.
guerra and bridgforth have two teenagers, three dogs, and a cat. bridgforth dedicates
this piece to guerra/who helped her name her butchness and who edited the (many) early drafts of this work.



CON GANAS

a literary/arte revista of queer voz, vida y la verdad

is requesting poetry/ short fiction/ experimental & spoken palabra/ essays & other forms of visual expression utilizing text/ pushing the boundaries of literary arte

& addressing this tema:

ser chingona, ser chingón

[ser xingona, ser xingón]

our first issue will go 2 print early june 2001.

deadline 4 submissions is may 31, 2001. Pieces should be emailed [if possible] to allgoinc@aol.com, tho other arrangements 4 submitting yr work can be made. Compensation 4 sharing yr work in the first few issues will be 10 copies of the revista yr work is featured in [we will work 2 be able to pay out feria for future issues]

The vision for CON GANAS:

to (re)create & sustain spaces 4 expressions of queer literary arte/ to document oUr vidas/ speak oUr truths/ leave artifacts 4 future generations of jotería/ support literary artistas/ get oUr work oUr/ revolutionize cultura/ look 2 ourselves, community-based publishing & distribution, el cuerpo y la tierra as agents for transforming the World

CON GANAS is part of ¡viva arte, viva cultura! [cultural arte project of the allgo]. Fmi on ¡viva arte, viva cultura! or to learn more about allgo's work, check out our website at www.allgo.org or contact us at 512.472.2001/ allgoinc@aol.com

Diabl-ios

Devil boys Juan y Juan

Papis that strut down the calles sucias
littered with alley cats, corona bottles,
and other cochiñeras

waiting for someone to come by
either with cash or some coke

Down the street, between the bars
and the bathhouse

Down my street

Down the same street that my vecinos live on
fiscando por las ventanas

Señora Rivas me hace caras when I take out the trash

She thinks I should be there with it
wrapped in white plastic lightly scented
maggot encrusted drawstring splendor

BASURA! she yells

Just because the Dos Juanes come to visit
when they're bored

When I'm bored

BASURA! me dice

Yeah, we play around in the backyard

Put the wet toothless alley cats in heat to shame

Then to the showers where we shave our heads
and our eyes water while shooting shaving cream loads

that slide down our piernas
to the clogging drain blocked
with pelitos and cum

then out to the the front porch
with the creek creek creek

of the old wooden floors

SIN BERUENZA! she yells

Fuck Señora Rivas, she aint nobody!

I can have as many putos over as I want
She needs to stop fiscando through the ventanas
if she cant hang

Why is she looking through
the windows at 4 am anyways

LA SIN BERUENZA ERES TU, CABRONA!

I yell back at her

I can have their brown culero nalgas
el sabor de unos Mexicanos

I want some barrio love every now and then

I want their cholo ass and homeboy pussy
and play chicano tug of war with their cueros
and finger the inside of their skins

Mis chulos, uncut papis son primos
true cousins from the rumbo

Yo quiero mis dos Juanes

my piel morena

my bidi bidi bom bom

my amor a la mexicana

and I will, every saturday night

until they get busted

AGAIN!

los dos juanes

by MIG~PAB

**BECAUSE we have
answers
when you ask**

WHAT NOW?



One source for all your HIV medication needs

3810 Medical Parkway, 512.451.7100

1621 N. Main Ave., 210.222.8450

STATSCRIPT Pharmacy
HIV/AIDS SPECIALISTS FOR LIFE

Omar's Corner

Here they Go Again...

I have to give it to them. They are smart. Using the latest census data to pit Latinas/os against Black people is the most effective way to perpetuate the white male patriarchy that is known as the united states of amerikkka. Data was recently released that the u.s. Latina/o population increased by 58% between 1990 and 2000, amounting to a rough total of 35 million. By some estimates, the Latina/o population has surpassed the Black population. (This is not counting the thousands, if not millions, of undocumented Latina/o immigrants who did not report due to fears of deportation.) But instead of the possibility of forging and strengthening relationships between the two largest non-white groups in the united states, a divisive "us versus them" picture was painted in the news reports I read. This infuriated me. These are the same tactics that the pro-187 coalition used to get Black Californians to vote for Proposition 187 (California anti-immigrant referendum during mid-90s). They must have had huge smiles of satisfaction seeing the Black and Latina/o communities fight like stray dogs over a scrap of rancid meat. Our communities *cannot* give in to this brainwashing this time. Blacks and Latinas/os comprise a quarter of the u.s. population. If we mobilize our peoples, we can affect real change. We *can* start the revolution. ¡Si se puede! chuy...

Recently, I've had some debates with a good christian friend regarding christianity. As an ex-catholic, I had a lot to say. One of my major sources of contention is the fact that a lot of christians feel that it is their obligation to convert everyone to claiming chuy (aka jesus christ) as their savior. My friend says that's not so. Oh, really. Didn't everyone get that tape about jesus christ in the mail recently? That is harassment and just plain evil. How much money did that organization spend to produce, manufacture, and ship that propaganda? Probably millions of dollars. Money that could have fed and clothed people; built affordable housing; supplemented health

Ruth,

It's been two years since we rekindled our love. This is to celebrate our anniversary, love, happiness, and future commitment. I am thankful everyday you're in my life.

te quiero mucho mi amorcito,

—Liz



[OMAR'S CORNER cont'd]

insurance; the list is endless. In Los Angeles, a cathedral costing approximately \$165 million dollars is in the works. If that is not disgustingly decadent, then I don't know what is. I neither want nor need any biblical-based propaganda in my life. My spirituality is very unique and individual to me. Just look at the 500+ years of damage christianity has inflicted on Aztlán and the rest of Latin America. Indigenous peoples prayed to their own deities for thousands of years, long before chuy was supposedly crucified. The sheer arrogance of christians is both amazing and revolting. Tonantzin y Yemayá, por favor, protegeme de ese niño...

Amor

I've lived with hiv for eight years now. The possibility of finding THE ONE was a fading ideal. But Yemayá (Ashe) brought a little fishie (we're both Pisces) named Marlon I. Morales (see page 4) into my life. It would have been very easy for us never to have met. Fortunately, we recognized our connection immediately, and after a week together nos enamoramos. As two Latino males, we are not taught to recognize any of our emotions, let alone love. Even being queer doesn't help the case. More than a few people have doubted our love. Whether it was jealousy (you know who you are), skepticism, or genuine concern, I don't know. True love is rare enough. But between two queer Latino, dark-skinned, indigenous-looking, serodiscordant males? Our love is real and is revolutionary. te quiero, mi pescadito.

If you wanna respond to anything I've written, hit me at xicanoprieto@aol.com

PRIDE FANDANGO 01

GAY PRIDE CON SABOR!!

Saturday June 23, 2001

9 pm to 1 am

The Clubhouse

1109 S. Pleasant Valley Road

SALSA, MERENGUE, TEJANO, HIP-HOP, OLD SKOOL

SAVE
THE
DATE!!

!snap!

a weekly writing group
for queer people of
color

facilitated by
sharon bridgforth

april to august 2001
austin, tejas

call 472.2001 for details
\$75-\$150 sliding scale fee
requested
registration is limited
scholarships are available

!snap! is made possible by funding thru the
gill foundation, peace development fund,
funding exchange, private donations, corazón
& other forms of community support

WOW!! What a Turn-Out!!!

Brazo a Brazo Retreat Builds Community among Gay & Bisexual Latino Men —Remi Vallejo

On March 16-18, 2001 we had our men's retreat, which we called Brazo A Brazo: Conociendome, Conociendote. It was a weekend to remember. We had thirteen people attend. We started out the first night by building an altar. Everyone brought two items that meant something to them. Some people shared family fotos, while others brought books, rosaries and flowers. The altar was a great because it gave all of us the opportunity to listen to everyone's feelings and emotions, which brought us closer to each other.

Alfonso Carlón, Marlon I. Morales, Joseph Acosta, Joe Jiménez, Omar González and Miguel García were some of the facilitators at the retreat. Marlon I. Morales talked about remembering, honoring and documenting our history and identities. Alfonso Carlón & Miguel García talked about embracing change: options & strategies for changing behavior. Joseph Acosta facilitated sessions on relationships with ourselves and with others. Joe Jiménez and Omar González did theirs on exploring sexual myths & identities. Everyone seemed to have enjoyed themselves & left with a great feeling.

The retreat was very relaxing for me, I felt like everyone there was very supportive and understanding about all the issues discussed through out the weekend I became more in touch with my inner self and bonded with all thirteen people who attended. I learned a lot about the people around me and how everyone is different but yet the same in their own way. I would also like to thank everyone that help put it together and who attended, for making the retreat a memorable weekend.

For more info on ALLGO's Brazo a Brazo men's programs contact Omar or Remi at 472.2001.



Brazo a Brazo retreat participants

The following respuesta was delivered by Alma López at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, Nuevo México on April 4, 2001.

Respuesta

Amid patriarchal attacks on her work, threats
& church-organized attempts to censor her
voz, Chicana lesbian artist & revolucionaria
Alma López speaks back

New Mexico is a place where I have met some of the most wonderful, caring, and giving people who are now my friends. Many of my friends in New Mexico, California and everywhere did not want me to be here today because they love me and are afraid that I would be hurt. I chose to be here because I want you to see that I am a person with feelings and thoughts like you.

I was born in Mexico and grew up in California. My family would visit our aunts, uncles and cousins in Mexico at least once every two years because my parents felt it was important that we know as much as possible about our history and culture. In Mexico and in Los Angeles, the Virgen de Guadalupe was always in a special place where we would all see her protecting us and our home.

We are all here today to discuss one of my digital prints in the Cyber Arte exhibition which features four Chicana/Latina/Hispana artists who combine traditional cultural images with state of the art technology. Although I know that this is meant to be a community discussion, standing here I feel like I am on trial. I feel that I am being forced to defend myself as an artist and a woman.

The "offending" work titled "Our Lady" is a photo-based digital print on exhibition in a museum, and not an object of devotion in a church. It is an image that could possibly arouse conversations on topics such as use of cultural images in art or the use of technology as a tool for creative expression.

This work features two of my friends. Performance artist Raquel Salinas as a strong Virgen dressed in roses and cultural activist Raquel Gutierrez as a nude butterfly angel. The two Raqueles and I grew up in Los Angeles with the image of the Virgen in our homes and community. The Virgen is everywhere. She's on tattoos, stickers, posters, air freshener cans, shirts and corner store murals, as well as church walls. Many, including myself, feel that because she is everywhere there is nothing anyone can do to change how the original image of the Virgen de Guadalupe is generally perceived.

(Slide of Virgen mural)

Catholic or not, Chicana/Latina/Hispana visual, literary or performance artists grew up with the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe, therefore entitling us to express our relationship to her in any which way relevant to our own experiences. Many artists, such as Yolanda Lopez, Ester Hernandez, Santa Barraza, Delilah Montoya, Yreina Cervantez and Raquel Salinas have shared their own personal experiences using the Virgen de Guadalupe.

(Slide of Santa Barraza retablo with Virgen)

(Slide of Delilah Montoya Self Help Graphic photo based print of

inmate with Virgen tattoo on back)
La Guadalupe is a photo mural installation that was executed for the exhibition *Ida y Vuelta* at the Musée Denys-Puech at Rodez, France and later purchased by the New Mexico Museum of Fine Art. It is presently included opening exhibition "Somos La Luz" at the National Hispanic Arts Center of New Mexico. The image was conceived as statement on Colonialism and how this condition

has effected the Chicano Population. Just as colonial issues are obscured into the layered agendas of the contemporary environment, La Guadalupe also conveys plural meanings.

More than twenty years ago, artists Yolanda Lopez and Ester Hernandez were threatened and attacked for portraying the Virgen in a feminist and liberating perspective.

(Slide of Yolanda Lopez "fem" Virgen)

Yolanda Lopez received bomb threats for her portrayal of the Virgen wearing low-heeled shoes. In this image the Virgen walks with her head bowed, hands clasped wearing a dress below the knee. I think that people were upset because the Virgen was able to walk.

The protest against my digital print "Our Lady" is organized and led by community activist Jose Villegas. New Mexico Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan has joined him, calling the artwork sacrilegious. Mr. Villegas' first and only attempt to communicate with me was through a threatening email. One week later, on television I saw the rally he organized against the museum.

Mr. Villegas and the Archbishop see the "Our Lady" digital print with exposed legs and belly, and a female angel's breasts as "offensive." Yet I know, that many churches, in Mexico and Europe and the United States, house images of nude male angels and most prominently, a Crucifixion practically naked except for a skimpy loincloth.

When I see "Our Lady" as well as the works portraying the Virgen by many Chicana artists, I see an alternative voice expressing the multiplicities of our lived realities. I see myself living a tradition of Chicanas who because of cultural and gender oppression, have asserted our voice. I see Chicanas creating a deep and meaningful connection to this revolutionary cultural female image who appeared to an indigenous person at a time of genocide, and an inspiration during liberation struggles such as the Mexican Revolution and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. I see Chicanas who understand faith.

Even if I look really hard at "Our Lady" and the works of many Chicana artists, I don't see what is so offensive. I see beautiful bodies that are gifts from our creator. Maybe because my mother breast-fed me as a baby, I see nurturing breasts. I see our strong nurturing mothers.

I am forced to wonder how men like Mr. Villegas and the Archbishop are looking at my work that they feel it is "blasphemy" and "the devil." I wonder how they see bodies of women. I wonder why they think that our bodies are so ugly and perverted that they cannot be seen in an art piece in a museum especially when nude or practically nude male bodies are seen in churches? I wonder why they are attacking me for

portraying a strong woman while protecting the sexual violence towards children and young women perpetrated by their own priests in their own churches? I wonder if those priests are ever brought to public trial like I am here today?

For me, this experience at times has been confusing and upsetting, primarily because a few men self-righteously believe that they have the authority to dictate how a particular image should be interpreted. They believe they can tell me how to think. I am a woman who has grown up with the Virgen. Who are these men to tell me how to relate to her?

Honestly, it scares me to see so many people organized to attack me. It makes me sad that this has been a divisive issue especially along gender lines, to see brothers and sisters fighting, and to see politicians trying to use this as an excuse to cut funds in art and education.

Even now, I don't want to personally attack Mr. Villegas. I admire his organizing skills especially since this has appeared in so many newspapers and television, not just here but in places like California, New York and Mexico City. However, as a community activists and I am sure, an admired member of his community, I wish his first contact with me would have been in the nature of an open dialogue with mutual consideration and respect for me as a member of the Chicano community. I wish that our community's intelligence and judgment had been respected instead of being asked to complain before even seeing my print.

Although, there are people who are offended by the "Our Lady" digital print, not everyone is offended and not everyone agrees that it should be removed. Emails, calls, and letters of support have included Catholics, Latinas/os, artists, educators, and various communities throughout the United States. This experience has also evoked an outpouring of positive feedback and support, which has affirmed my belief that there really isn't anything

wrong with this image. So many people have emailed me and contacted the museum expressing their concern over these attacks. I want to thank everyone who has been wonderfully supportive. I wish I could read all of their letters to you.

I hope that my digital print "Our Lady" is not removed from the exhibition. I know that not everyone likes my work, but no one person has the right to remove it and therefore prevent others from seeing it. This museum is an education institution like a university. This is not a church.

The Museum's funding nor directors should be threatened because I have exhibited a digital print. No one here has done anything wrong to be judged in the way we are being

Personally, I feel that if my work is removed it means that I have no right to express myself as an artist and a woman. It means that there must be something wrong and sexually perverted with our female bodies. It means that as Chicanas we can only be sexualized or only be virgins. It means that only men can tell us how to look at the Virgen. It means that we cannot look upon the Virgen as an image of a strong woman like us.

judged. I produced a print that relates to my own experience. Curator Tey Mariana Nunn's connection and commitment to community is obvious by her selection of four Chicana/Latina/Hispana artists. As a Chicana and community activist, Tey Mariana knows that women of color artists are continually marginalized and therefore rarely have opportunities to exhibit in museums. She is an important and loved member of our Chicana community. Directors Joyce Ice and Thomas Wilson, and the museum staff have demonstrated their commitment to exhibit work that reflects, educates and prompts dialogue in a civil society.

What happens to the rights of artists and curators to create and exhibit without censorship? What happens to the rights of community and audiences to be represented and intellectually respected? I feel that as artists and museums along with our friends and families, we need everyone to know that we are also taxpayers. We need to tell our political representatives that we also decide what to do with our vote and our money. We need to tell everyone that we oppose censorship, and funding cuts to art and education.

Personally, I feel that if my work is removed it means that I have no right to express myself as an artist and a woman. It means that there must be something wrong and sexually perverted with our female bodies. It means that as Chicanas we can only be sexualized or only be virgins. It means that only men can tell us how to look at the Virgen. It means that we cannot look upon the Virgen as an image of a strong woman like us.

Thank you.

Alma Lopez
Los Angeles, April 4, 2001

Alma López is a visual and public artist born in Sinaloa, Mexico and raised in Los Angeles. She earned a B.A. from UC Santa Barbara and a M.F.A. from UC Irvine. She exhibits her work extensively and has received numerous awards for her work including a 1997 Design Excellence in Public Art from the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department for a digital mural project; a 1997-99 California Arts Council residency grant; a 1998 COLA (City of Los Angeles) Individual Artist Grant; a 1998 Brody Fellowship for Visual Artists; and a 1999 Frontera-Ford Siqueiros-Pollock IV Binational Border Visual Art Award.

She is the director and co-founder of Homegirl Productions, a public art collaborative focusing on the chiasmus of African American and Chicana/o experiences; a co-founding member of L.A. Coyotas, a Chicana multidisciplinary artists collective; and co-founding member of Tongues, a new brown/black queer webzine. Currently, she continues her digital series on culture, gender and sexuality titled "Lupe & Sirena." She is the Promotions Manager for Bienestar Human Services, designs bookcovers for the University of Arizona Press, and is an artist in residence at the 18th Street Arts Complex.

Alma's digital images represent a new direction in Chicano art that is at once technological and aesthetic. She recontextualizes major icons of Mexican and Chicano cultures, bringing lesbian desire into relationship with nationalist myth, border culture, political economy, and the built environment. Her work basically states that if you cannot imagine someone or some group, then you will not see them. Her work seeks the new imagings that make social visibility possible. Alma López is a participating artist/scholar in ALLGO's Con la Boca Abierta program.

we are taught not to question and these are still the war years: images of the virgin mary

by jackie cuevas
(for alma lopez)

jackie cuevas is an Austin-based Chicana
dyke writer & artist/ she is the author of
otherhood, u.s.a./ her work entitled
"Images of the Virgin Mary" will be
featured in the forthcoming con ganas
literary/arte revista/ in addition, jackie
cuevas is a participating artist/scholar in
ALLGO's Con la Boca Abierta program.

when i say
"the virgin mary"
what do you see?

a blue veil/mantilla
hands clasped in prayer
glowing light around her face
is there a baby jesus in the picture?

sometimes i see my mother's face
sometimes i see a mexican man
alone in a field
La Virgen appears in front of him
he drops to his knees in awe.
The next day he shares his vision
with his fellow villagers
but he fails to mention
that he was drunk on mezcal
and high on his favorite herb
at the time

centuries later
an artist in Aztlan
has a vision:
The Virgin Mary
struts her stuff
in a flowered bikini

some men balk: "you have no right to..."
"you don't own the Virgin Mary"

but the Virgin Mary
belonged to the people
before she was claimed
by the catholic church

perhaps one day
a corporation
will trademark her
The Virgin Mary™
(i can already see
a line of dolls:
Career Virgin Mary,
Malibu Virgin Mary, etc.)

Seriously, though, Alma Lopez has the
right, and the talent, to portray La Virgen
any way she chooses. She can worship
her, pray to her, love her, desire her, mock
her, paint her, dress like her, or spit on
her. She can have her own relationship
with her and depict it artistically. And she
deserves to share her artistic expressions
in community, with the support of
countless artists, writers, Catholics, non-
Catholics, and casual on-lookers.
Unfortunately, because of societal
boundaries around sexuality, sensuality,

desire, femininity, spirituality (and so on),
any artist who speaks her own truth to these
may come up against opposition/fear/
reactionism. But fortunately, through the
insistence of our artistic expressions—and
through collective action—innovative art like
that by Alma Lopez will continue to
challenge/transform the world we live in.

We as queers have been hurt by the catholic
church. Many of us who were raised
catholic struggle with the juxtaposition
between homophobic religious doctrine and
our desires/lives/realities as queers. It is
precisely through re-visioning, re-inventing—
even mocking—cultural and religious beliefs/
symbols/icons that we can discover our own
truths. By taking ownership of the symbol of
the Virgin Mary, an artist establishes her
own relationship with her and joins a
continuing dialogue with other artists who
question/portray La Virgen in their own
ways. By depicting La Virgen as a sexy-
powerful Latina, Alma claims her as her
own, re-invents her, frees her.

Dear Offended Catholic Chicano Activist
Man in New Mexico:
Are you threatened
because
she is
strong?
powerful?
Latina?
sexy?
a dyke?
all of the above?
is that why you think she "has no right"?

Another question, hermano:
How long will we keep fighting each other?
And
Why don't you use all that macho energy
to examine your own sexism
and that activist energy
to dismantle our shared oppressions?

[Note: The Virgin Mary is copyrighted 2001
by Jackie Cuevas. Anyone who utters the
words "Virgin Mary" or "La Virgen" or
variations thereof must send royalty
payments to me.]

[The opinions expressed here are not
necessarily the opinions of the editors or the
Virgin Mary.]

[May the Virgin Mary be with you.]

It's not over. The meeting between
Museum representatives, censors and
Alma López/arte supporters has been
rescheduled for Monday, April 16 at
10am at Sweeney Center in Santa Fe.
(The room at the previous meeting was
not large enough to safely accommodate
everyone.) We still need your support.
Please email or contact the following:

1. Email the museum in support of artists
and museums' right to exhibit artwork.

jice@moifa.org (Dr. Joyce Ice, Director)

TMNunn@moifa.org (Dr. Tey Marianna
Nunn, Curator of Contemporary Hispano/
Latino Collections)

2. Email or call your friends, especially if
you have any who live in New
Mexico. Please ask them to see the
exhibition, write their comments down, let
someone at the museum know how they
felt about the exhibition. More
information at www.moifa.org or
(505) 476- 1200

3. Write a letter in support of Alma
López's work, the exhibition and the work
of curator Tey Marianna Nunn and the
museum staff. The letter should be
addressed to:

Thomas Wilson, Director
Museum of New Mexico
P.O. Box 2087
Santa Fe, NM 87501

And please cc the following:
Joyce Ice, Ph.D.

Tey Marianna Nunn, Ph.D.
Curator of Contemporary Hispano and
Latino collections
P.O. Box 2087
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Dr. Edson Way
Cultural Affairs Officer
Office of Cultural Affairs
La Villa Rivera Building
228 E. Palace
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505 827 6364

Alma Lopez
c/o Tongues/VIVA
1125 N. McCadden Place Suite 148
Los Angeles, CA 90038-1212